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MEMOIRS OF A SLAVE-TRADER

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THEODORE CANOT

# Memoirs of a Slave-Trader

Written out by Brantz Mayer and now edited by  
A. W. Lawrence



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## INTRODUCTION

THE slave-trade began as such a gentlemanly occupation that it had scarcely any human interest; not until the days of its decline did it attract the picturesque scoundrels, of every nation and colour, whose manner of life is revealed in this book by one of their leaders. The founders of their profession, back in the sixteenth century, had been succeeded by companies of respectable merchants, supported by the full power of their countries; even a war between England and Spain owed its existence to the Catholic King's repudiation of the English company's contract to supply negroes to his American possessions.

As the aboriginal Americans died off under Spanish exploitation, so the flood of negroes increased, with ruinous consequences to the civilization of the parts of Africa from which they came – pre-eminently the central stretch of the western coast, where many of the tribes had had their black stock enlivened by an element of Moorish (Berber) blood. From the accounts of the early voyagers it appears that the people of this region cultivated the soil industriously and successfully, maintained large herds of animals and abundance of poultry, and excelled in handicrafts, so that their cotton goods were even marketable in Europe; the houses were kept clean, and the pleasant villages and towns struck the traveller as less crowded and distinctly less smelly than those at home. The country was generally peaceful and contented, and native traders wandered up and down the continent, alone or in caravans, with far greater security for life and property than their contemporaries in Christian or Moslem lands. The slave-trade altered everything for the worse; the small number of persons held by the local population in a mild form of servitude quickly failed to satisfy the overseas demand, and tribe warred against tribe, party against party, solely to obtain captives whom the Europeans at the ports would buy at an average of £2 per head. The West Coast relapsed more and more into barbarism and desolation, for the call for negroes in tropical America never diminished; half of every cargo died during the first year of slavery, not so much from the rigours of the passage as from the process of 'seasoning' in a new climate, and mortality

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among the survivors normally exceeded their birth-rate. Yet the treatment to which they were subjected was seldom intolerable, and in the Spanish colonies, with the dishonourable exception of Cuba, their life might be happy and comfortable.

The bulk of the carrying trade lay in English hands; in 1790 it was estimated that 38,000 slaves, out of a total of 74,000, crossed the Atlantic on English ships. This was unfortunate, for unprejudiced observers agree in considering their practices less humane than those of their competitors, the French, Portuguese, Dutch and Danes. But even in these latter days of the trade, when private adventurers had ousted the chartered companies by their lower standard of expenditure and, consequently, of slaves' comfort, the masters of British ships were not conspicuous for depravity – for public opinion had not become so formed as to drive decent men out of an occupation approved by the governing class and by the Established Church. Though the Quakers had preached against slavery as long ago as 1670, and both Wesley and the Baptists had now associated themselves with the movement, godly persons did not scruple to transport 'the servile progeny of Ham.' Of one religious commander of a slaver we read that he ate no meat and drank no strong liquor from the day of leaving his home port to the end of the voyage, to strengthen his constancy towards the multitude of women who would come under his charge. This was John Newton (1725–1807), who rose to some fame as the eloquent Wesleyan rector of a London church and as the author, like his friend Cowper, of hymns of unusual merit, including:

'How sweet the name of Jesus sounds  
In a believer's ear!'

It was not till 1807, thirty-one years after the first motion to that effect had been introduced into the House of Commons, that England declared the carrying of slaves a contraband traffic, punishable by fines and imprisonment; and by that time Denmark (in 1792) and the United States (in 1794 and 1807) had already led the way, the latter again through the

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influence of the Quakers. France, Sweden and Holland soon fell into line, Portugal and Spain had to be persuaded to do so by grants of £300,000 and £400,000 from the British Treasury; as a result, the slave-trade became universally illegal in 1820, except for Portuguese vessels plying between Brazil and Africa south of the Equator. This exception terminated ten years later. Nevertheless, it was believed that some 50,000 Africans reached Brazil every year up to 1850, when its government finally took measures to enforce the law. In actual fact, importers found an eager market in every country where the institution of slavery remained statutory; its early abolition in the British and French West Indies closed a very profitable field, but prospects continued bright in Cuba and in certain of the United States, through the bought connivance of local officials and the kindly blindness of their governments. Yet at the African coast ships had to pass a blockade of ever-growing stringency; at first it was conducted only by the British fleet, but after a while the French co-operated, and in 1842 the United States agreed to send a squadron, for it was notorious that the claim that no American vessel might be apprehended by a foreign power had enabled many a hard-pressed slaver to escape capture. To a lesser extent it continued to do so, for when British or French warships found a suspect they had not the right to detain it until the arrival of their American colleagues. But in the course of time the task grew simpler, for the traffic became practically limited to certain small areas of the coast, as the intervening land fell under the control of civilized nations.

Especially damaging to the trade was the colonization of Africa by emancipated negroes. In 1786, 700 blacks, who had severally found their way to the British Isles, and were causing some embarrassment there, agreed to settle at Sierra Leone: as it happened, only half of them embarked, because they had heard a rumour that their real destination was the convict station of Botany Bay, but the London authorities added to the company 60 white women of incorrigibly abandoned habits, with the intent that they should reduce the preponderance of

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males among the colonists. Four months after arrival in their new home, there survived only half of this band of women and 242 of their companions. The next detachment came from Nova Scotia, being composed of American negroes who had joined the royal forces in the War of Independence, attracted by the promise of emancipation; the first party of these emigrants numbered 1196, of whom no less than 65 died on the voyage. Then an American society tried to establish some free blacks at Sierra Leone, but failing to secure the necessary permission, chose a new site, which it called Christopolis; the name was subsequently changed to Monrovia, after a Thinker almost equally revered in the land of his nativity, the President Monroe who formulated the Doctrine. So, in 1821, began the republic of Liberia, which slowly extended its territory into the favourite resorts of the slavers, purchasing more and more land from the tribal chiefs as additional colonists arrived from the States.

The end of the slave-trade was in sight; it had ceased to allure any but the most desperate men, of all degrees of villainy, and the penalties attached to it had become correspondingly severe, some nations even classing it as piracy. But so high were the profits that slavers flourished if only one ship in three succeeded in taking its cargo across the Atlantic, though they now lost many of their slaves before they got aboard in sending them through the surf of open beaches, as the harbours were too strictly watched by the blockaders to be usable; and many more died at sea than under previous conditions. The rakish-looking craft employed were built for speed, to take advantage of light and inconstant breezes in the presence of the heavier men-o'-war; they held but one slave-deck, instead of the two or three fitted in their stately predecessors, and in this narrow space, often not more than 18 inches high, was crushed a tight mass of naked men and women. In spite of the irons which riveted them together in pairs, slaves sometimes strangled one another merely to crawl nearer to the few shafts of air; and in rough weather they might lie under closed hatches for weeks, till eventually living bodies had to

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be unfettered from corpses already putrid. Moreover, for the sake of economy, the allowance of food and water on board barely sufficed to maintain existence through a voyage of normal duration. The brutalities of the crew frequently added to the regular horrors: no wonder, therefore, that slaves, allowed on deck for an airing, occasionally chose to leap overboard, chained in their couples, sooner than endure their lives.

This last and worst phase of the slave-trade, just a century ago, is most vividly presented in the narrative of Theodore Canot, who was born at Florence around 1807, the son of a French soldier and a 'blooming Piedmontese.' He went to sea before his twelfth birthday, as an apprentice, and quickly gained promotion, but after an involuntary association with wrecker-pirates on the Keys of Cuba, he drifted into the African traffic. In 1826 he first sighted the West Coast, 'full of woods and great rocks hard aboard the shore, and the billows beating so sore that the seas brake upon the shore as white as snow and the water mounted so high that a man might easily discern it four leagues off.' So an earlier sailor describes it, but Canot had no eyes for inanimate nature. In compensation he tells of the strange lives of the slavers with whom he decided to work, on the Pongo River, which has since become part of the Sierra Leone Protectorate. The great man of the Pongo was the mulatto Ormond, of whose father, an equally striking character, the Sierra Leone Company gathered this report in 1792:

'He went from England about thirty-five years ago as a cabin-boy to a slave-ship, and was retained as an assistant at a slave factory at Sierra Leone River. There he acquired a knowledge which qualified him for setting up a slave factory afterwards for himself in a neighbouring part towards the north, and, though unable to read or write, he became an expert slave-trader, so much so that he realized about £30,000. His cruelties were almost incredible. Two persons who seem to have had good means of information give the following account of them. One of them, who lived for some time

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near Ormond, said he knew it to be a fact that he used to tie stones to the necks of his unsaleable slaves, and drown them in the river during the night; and that his cruelty was not confined to blacks, for, being offended by a white agent one Christmas day, when drinking freely with some company, he made his slaves tie up the European, and gave him, with his own hands, four hundred lashes, from which he died in a few days. The other person allowed his general character for barbarity, and added that he was told by a black witness that, Ormond having caught a black wife of his in a criminal conversation with one of his slaves, he burnt them both to death with a tar barrel.

'This savage had attained to the same trust with the Africans in witchcraft and *grigris* or charms, and was subject to silly, superstitious fears. Providence, having permitted this man to become an abandoned and successful slave-trader, was pleased also to allow him to experience a reverse of fortune. A few years ago, having lost his health, he went to the Isle de Los for the sake of sea air and medical help, leaving his affairs under the care of a mulatto who was his son. Happening to have recently destroyed one of the towns of the Bagos, which surround his factory, they took this opportunity to retaliate. Ormond's slaves having been little attached to him, favoured the Bagos, and, the place being taken, they shared the plunder. The buildings were all burnt, and the goods in them, amounting, it is said, to a value of £30,000, were either destroyed or carried away. Young Ormond and his adherents were put to death. Old Ormond lived to hear the news, but died about a month after.'

It appears, however, from Canot's story that he died far from penniless, for the surviving members of his large family had retained some of his possessions undamaged.

At Ormond's place Canot met a Fula chief, whose Moslem name he gallicizes into the strange shape of Ahmah-de-Bellah, and by whose invitation he paid one of the first recorded visits to the highlands of Futa Jallon (in French Guinea).

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Though the nominal religion of the Fulas succeeded in bringing them to respect Mohammed's law against enslaving a Believer slightly more than his prohibition of alcohol, they remained the most inveterate slave-raiders of West Africa down to recent times; indeed, their Nigerian branch continued the trade on a large scale till Lord Lugard broke their power in 1903. By the connection, therefore, with the interior of the continent, where human material abounded, the Pongo settlement prospered exceedingly, but it ended in disaster, through British and French naval visitations, and Canot barely escaped a lengthy term of imprisonment in France.

On his return to Africa, he worked awhile in the lagoons of Gallinhas, the acknowledged headquarters of the trade since the cleansing of the Pongo. The district, which owed its name to the chickens eaten by Portuguese explorers, lay conveniently on the ungoverned border of Sierra Leone and Liberia. Branch establishments, directed from this base, occupied various points on the long coast-line of the black republic, which had not the man-power to control the country outside the civilized communities; Canot opened one such minor station on the east side of Monrovia, at New Sesters or Sestros (at present called New Cess, ten miles from Grand Basa), a site which Liberia had bought in 1825 but had failed to hold. He found the export of slaves from this open shore too hazardous, once the blockaders had taken note of his activities, and wisely declared his intention to adopt a legitimate line of business, two years, as it turned out, before the New Cess stations were utterly destroyed by a joint expedition of British ships and Liberian troops.

The obvious spot for residence and cultivation in Liberia was the promontory of Cape Mount, where a mountain a thousand feet high rises sheer from the Atlantic. Older schemes for a sugar-plantation or a negro colony had not materialized, so Canot found the neighbourhood vacant except for a few slavers. He built his house and planted his ground, but in those days the West Coast gave little encouragement to honest commerce, and when his venture proved financially unsuccessful he fell under the suspicion of reverting

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to his old means of livelihood, with the consequence that his settlement was destroyed. His own denial of the charge is dressed in extravagantly injured verbiage, but contains no definite statement which might serve to clear him. The case for the other side is presented by an officer of the United States Navy, who himself served on the Coast:<sup>1</sup> 'The *Dolphin* [U.S.N.] was lying at Cape Mount, watching the suspicious American bark *Chancellor*, which was trading with a slave-dealer named Canot. The British cruiser *Favourite* was stationed off the Cape, and suggested to the chiefs, that as they were in treaty with his government for the suppression of the slave-trade, and as Canot was on their territory making preparations for slaving, they were bound to destroy his establishment. The chiefs accordingly burnt his premises, containing a large amount of goods he had shipped at New York. Canot, having been by no means secure in conscience, had left with his family and taken up his residence in Monrovia.

'The *Dolphin* proceeded to Porto Praya for stores, and the *Chancellor* was watched in the meantime by the British cruisers at the Cape and at the Gallinas. . . . On the return of the *Dolphin*, the *Chancellor* was seized by Commander Pope as a prize, on the ground of having a slave-deck laid, and water-casks with rice on board sufficient for a slave-cargo, and sent to the United States for adjudication.'

The matter of the *Chancellor* deserves attention. Canot says that 'circumstances' had obliged him to make a rapid voyage to New York and back; he returned on this vessel (presumably with the goods referred to) and proceeded therein towards Gallinas, the slavers' headquarters. If the *Chancellor* were intended to carry slaves – and it would not have sailed with a slave-deck with any other design, since that fact alone might lead to its confiscation – then these mysterious 'circumstances' must have had *some* close connection with the slave-trade. It looks as though Canot had been driven by financial stress to take service once more with the Gallinas company.

<sup>1</sup> Andrew Hull Foote, *Africa and the American Flag*, New York, 1854.

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But it is not unreasonable to question whether his intention to abandon the trade had ever been sincere. It had, of course, been dictated, to a large extent, by the plain, inexorable truth that he could no longer continue his operations at New Cess, but he also declares that he came to dislike his occupation, as a result of having witnessed a cannibal orgy in a war stimulated by his demand for slaves. He lays the scene of the atrocities he so vividly describes at Digbi in Liberia, but the Vai population of the place has never been accused of cannibalism by any other authority. In all probability the guileful Canot invented the story to substantiate his alleged change of heart, for which he could find *no* convincing reason in actuality. That in itself is strong evidence against any such change, which would appear contrary to the whole life and character of the man.

On the other hand, Hall, the white leader of Maryland's plan for black colonization, who had visited Canot at Cape Mount, considered the destruction of his settlement unwarranted. Doubtless the full truth of the matter will never be discovered.

A ruined man, Canot spent some years in South America without deriving much profit, and then went to the States, where in 1853 Hall introduced him to Brantz Mayer, a prominent fellow-citizen of Baltimore. As secretary of the legation at Mexico City, Mayer had found opportunities to see something of primitive life, and he showed his interest in the subject in his books on Mexico and in the papers he read to the Maryland Historical Society, of which he was the founder. He had the same object in view when he edited Canot's memoirs, supplementing the adventurer's written records by his conversation, and wrapping the hard story in a slow, rumbling rhetoric. Canot, who needed money and doubtless got it, supplied all the information one could wish, graphically told, with an occasional touch of what sounds like hypocrisy and plenty of that sardonic, tolerant humour acquired by white men who live among other races. For the most part he undoubtedly told the truth, here and there (as was but natural) he seems to have represented his own actions and the ways of his trade in too favourable a light, but only one definite essay

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in pure fiction has been detected – the cannibal feast, juicily described after the manner of *Robinson Crusoe*.

Mayer published the book in both London and New York, in 1854. In England it went through two editions in as many years: in America, too, it had considerable success. 'We fearlessly recommend it,' said the *Binghampton Daily Republic*, 'as a work of more than ordinary merit,' and the publishers could quote equally warm notices from the *Albany Argus*, the *Buffalo Morning Express* and the *Troy Times*. The *Worcester Palladium*, however, feared that 'its tone and sentiments may not be calculated to exert a purifying and ennobling influence upon *all* who read it,' as was emphatically the case with the next volume it reviewed, Maria J. McIntosh's *The Lofty and the Lowly; or, Good in All and None all Good*.

Meanwhile, Canot had met with better fortune, for he went to France and received an appointment in the South Seas from Napoleon III; his father's service in the Grand Army counted in his favour with the Emperor, who generously supported negro rights but never missed an opportunity to emphasize his relationship to his distinguished predecessor.

But all this happened seventy years ago. And then, when Canot and Mayer died, their book passed out of mind, till Sir Harry Johnston's *Liberia* called for its re-publication – now tardily accomplished, with the omission, it is hoped, of most of the over-heavy ballast with which Mayer obscured the vitality of the forcible, reckless, resourceful egoist, a man of the type which Africa still calls. Though devoid of the personal charm and felicitous speech of Aloysius Horn, his adventures contain more desperate thrills; and these have greater variety than O'Neil's recent exploits in Swaziland. For Canot knew Africa at the worst time in all its history and never again will such a story be written.

A. W. LAWRENCE.

MEMOIRS OF A SLAVE-TRADER

*The spelling has not been standardised in this abridgment; its text is modernised only where the first (American) edition made an immoderate use of italics, block capitals or exclamation marks.*

## CHAPTER ONE

WHILST Bonaparte was conquering Italy, my father, Louis Canot, a captain and paymaster in the French army, won the heart and hand of a blooming Piedmontese, to whom I owe my birth in the capital of Tuscany.

My father was faithful to the Emperor as well as the Consul. He followed his sovereign until death closed his career on the field of Waterloo.

Soldiers' wives are seldom rich, and my mother was no exception to the rule. She was left in very moderate circumstances, with six children to support; but the widow of an old campaigner, who had partaken the sufferings of many a long and dreary march with her husband, was neither disheartened by the calamity nor at a loss for thrifty expedients to educate her younger offspring. Accordingly, I was kept at school, studying geography, arithmetic, history and the languages, until near twelve years old, when it was thought time for me to choose a profession. I had always been a greedy devourer of books of travel, so I avowed my preference for a seafaring life. Proper inquiries were made at Leghorn; and, in a few weeks, I found myself ready to embark, as an apprentice, upon the American ship *Galatea*, of Boston.

It was in the year 1819 that I first saluted the element upon which it has been my destiny to pass so much of my life. The reader will readily imagine the discomforts to which I was subjected on this voyage. Born and bred in the interior of Italy, I had only the most romantic ideas of the sea. My career was necessarily one of great hardship; and, to add to my misfortunes, I had neither companion nor language to vent my grief and demand sympathy. Besides the officers of the *Galatea*, there was a clerk on board, whom the captain directed to teach me English, so that, by the time we reached Sumatra, I was able to stand up for my rights, and plead my cause. As we could not obtain a cargo of pepper on the island, we proceeded to Bengal; and, on our arrival at Calcutta, the captain, who was also supercargo, took apartments on

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shore, where the clerk and myself were allowed to follow him.

According to the fashion of that period, the house provided for our accommodation was a spacious and elegant one, equipped with every oriental comfort and convenience, while fifteen or twenty servants were always at the command of its inmates. For three months we lived like nabobs, and sorry, indeed, was I when the clerk announced that the vessel's loading was completed, and our holiday over.

We touched at St. Helena for supplies, but as Napoleon was still alive, a British frigate met us within five miles of that rock-bound coast, and after furnishing a scant supply of water, bade us take our way homeward.

I remember very well that it was a fine night in July 1820 when we touched the wharf at Boston, Massachusetts.

Captain Towne retired to Salem after the hands were discharged, and took me with him to reside in his family until he was ready for another voyage.

I sailed-during five years from Salem on voyages to various parts of the world, always employing my leisure, while on shore and at sea, in familiarizing myself minutely with the practical and scientific details of the profession to which I designed devoting my life. When my apprenticeship was over, I made two or three successful voyages as mate, until a 'disappointment' caused me to forsake my employers. This blight overtook me at Antwerp – a port noted for the backslidings of young seamen. My hard-earned pay soon diminished very sensibly, while I was desperately in love with a Belgian beauty, who made a complete fool of me – for at least three months! From Antwerp, I betook myself to Paris to vent my second 'disappointment.' Few young men of eighteen or twenty have lived faster. The gaming tables at Frascati's and the Palais Royal finished my purse; and, leaving an empty trunk as a recompense for my landlord, I took 'French leave' one fine morning, and hastened to sea.

In a week, I was on board a Dutch galliot, bound to Havana; but I soon perceived that I was under the command of two

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captains – male and female. The regular master superintended the navigation, while the dame was the actual owner of the craft, and, from skipper to cabin-boy, governed not only our actions but our stomachs. I know not whether it was piety or economy that swayed her soul, but I never met a person who was so rigid as this lady in the observance of the church calendar, especially whenever a day of abstinence allowed her to deprive us of our beef. Nothing but my destitution compelled me to ship in this craft; still, to say the truth, I had well-nigh given up all idea of returning to the United States, and determined to engage in any adventurous expedition that my profession offered. In 1824, it will be remembered, Mexico, the Spanish Main, Peru, and the Pacific coasts were renowned for the fortunes they bestowed on enterprise; and, as the galliot was bound to Havana, I hailed her as a floating bridge to my El Dorado.

On the seventh night after our departure, while beating out of the Bay of Biscay with a six-knot breeze, in a clear moonlight, we ran foul of a vessel which approached us on the opposite tack. Whence she sprang no one could tell. In an instant, she appeared and was on us with a dreadful concussion. Every man was prostrated on deck and all our masts were carried away. From the other vessel we heard shrieks and a cry of despair; but the ill-omened miscreant disappeared as rapidly as she approached, and left us floating, a helpless log, on a sea proverbial for storms.

We contrived, however, to reach the port of Ferrol, in Spain, where we were detained four months in consequence of the difficulty of obtaining the materials for repairs, notwithstanding this place is considered the best and largest shipyard of Castile.

It was at Ferrol that I met with a singular adventure, which was well-nigh depriving me of my personal identity. I went one afternoon in my boat to the other side of the harbour to obtain some pieces of leather from a tannery, and, having completed my purchase, was lounging slowly towards the quay, when I stopped at a house for a drink of water. I was handed a

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tumbler by the trim-built, black-eyed girl, who stood in the doorway, and whose rosy lips and sparkling eyes were more the sources of my thirst than the water; but, while I was drinking, the damsel ran into the dwelling, and hastily returned with her mother and another sister, who stared at me a moment without saying a word, and simultaneously fell upon my neck, smothering my lips and cheeks with repeated kisses!

'Oh! *mi querido hijo*,' said the mother.

'*Carissimo Antonio*,' sobbed the daughter.

'*Mi hermano!*' exclaimed her sister.

'Dear son, dear Antonio, dear brother! Come into the house; where have you been? Your grandmother is dying to see you once more! Don't delay an instant, but come in without a word! *Por dios!* that we should have caught you at last, and in such a way: *Ave Maria! madrecita, aquí viene Antonito!*'

In the midst of all these exclamations, embraces, fondlings, and kisses, I stood staring about me with wide eyes and mouth, and half-drained tumbler in hand. I asked no questions, but as the dame was buxom, and the girls were fresh, I kissed in return, and followed unreluctantly as they half dragged, half carried me into their domicile. As soon as I was seated, I took the liberty to say that there might possibly be some mistake; but I was quickly silenced. My *madrecita* declared at once, and in the presence of my four shipmates, that, six years before, I left her on my first voyage in a Dutch vessel; that my *querido padre* had gone to bliss two years after my departure; and, accordingly, that now, I, Antonio Gomez y Carrasco, was the only surviving male of the family, and, of course, would never more quit either her, my darling sisters, or the old *pobrecita*, our grandmother. I hastened, in all seriousness, to explain and insist on their error. But all was unavailing; they argued and persisted; they brought in the neighbours; lots of old women and old men, with rusty cloaks or shawls, with cigars or *cigarillos* in mouth, formed a jury of inquest; so that, in the end, there was an unanimous verdict in favour of my Galician nativity. Finding matters had indeed taken so serious a turn, I resolved to yield; and, assuming the manner of a penitent

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prodigal, I kissed the girls, embraced my mother, passed my head over both shoulders of my grand-dame, and promised a visit next day.

As I did not keep my word, the imaginary 'mother' applied to the ministers of law to enforce her rights over the truant boy. The *Alcalde*, after hearing my story, dismissed the claim; but my dissatisfied relatives summoned me, on appeal, before the governor of the district, nor was it without infinite difficulty that I at last succeeded in shaking off their annoying consanguinity.

I have always been at a loss to account for this queer mistake. It is true that my father was in Spain with the French army during Napoleon's invasion, but that excellent gentleman was a faithful spouse as well as valiant soldier, and I do not remember that he ever sojourned in the pleasant port of Ferrol.

## CHAPTER TWO

\*

AT length we sailed for Havana, and nothing of importance occurred to break the monotony of our hot and sweltering voyage, save a sudden flurry of jealousy on the part of the captain, who imagined I made an attempt to conquer the pious and economical heart of his wife! In truth, nothing was further from my mind or taste; but as his passion was stimulated by the lies of a cabin boy, I was forced to undergo an inquisitorial examination, which I resisted fruitlessly. The Bloomer-dame, who knew her man, assumed such an air of outraged innocence and calumniated virtue, interlarded with sobs, tears, and hysterics, that her perplexed husband was quite at his wit's end, but terminated the scene by abruptly ordering me to my state-room.

This was at nightfall. At daylight he emerged from his cabin with orders to have the tell-tale cabin boy soundly thrashed; and, when Madame mounted the deck, I saw at a glance that her influence was completely restored. In the course of the day, I was requested to resume my duty on board, but I stubbornly refused. Indeed, my denial caused the captain great uneasiness, for he was a miserable navigator, and now that we approached the Bahamas, my services were chiefly requisite. The jealous scamp was urgent in desiring me to forget the past and resume duty; still I declined, especially as his wife informed me in private that there would perhaps be peril in my compliance.

The day after we passed the 'Hole in the Wall' and steered for Salt Key, we obtained no meridian observation, and no one on board, except myself, was capable of taking a lunar, which in our position, among unknown keys and currents, was of the greatest value. I knew this troubled the skipper, yet, after his wife's significant warning, I did not think it wise to resume my functions. Nevertheless, I secretly made calculations and watched the vessel's course. Another day went by without a noontide observation; but, at midnight, I furtively obtained a lunar, by the result of which I found we were drifting

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close to the Cuba reefs, about five miles from the Cruz del Padre.

As soon as I was sure of my calculation and sensible of imminent danger, I did not hesitate to order the second officer – whose watch it was – to call all hands and tack ship. At the same time, I directed the helmsman to luff the galliot close into the wind's eye.

But the new mate, proud of his command, refused to obey until the captain was informed; nor would he call that officer, inasmuch as no danger was visible ahead on the allotted course. But time was precious. Delay would lose us. As I felt confident of my opinion, I turned abruptly from the disobedient mariners, and letting go the main brace, brought the vessel to with the topsail aback. Quickly, then, I ordered the watch as it rushed aft, to clew up the mainsail; – but alas! no one would obey; and, in the fracas, the captain, who rushed on deck, ignorant of the facts or danger, ordered me back to my state-room with curses for my interference in his skilful navigation.

With a shrug of my shoulders, I obeyed. Remonstrance was useless. For twenty minutes the galliot cleft the waters on her old course, when the look-out screamed: 'Hard up! – rocks and breakers dead a-head!'

'Put down the helm!' yelled the confused second-mate; – but the galliot lost her headway, and, taken aback, shaved the edge of a foam-covered rock, dropping astern on a reef with seven feet water around her.

All was consternation; – sails flapping; breakers roaring; ropes snapping and beating; masts creaking; hull thumping; men shouting! The captain and his wife were on deck in the wink of an eye. Everyone issued an order and no one obeyed. At last, *the lady* shouted – 'let go the anchor!' – the worst command that could be given – and down went the best bower and the second anchor, while the vessel swung round, and dashed flat on both of them. No one seemed to think of clewing up the sails, and thereby lessening the impetuous surges of the unfortunate galliot.

Our sad mishap occurred about one o'clock in the morning.

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Fortunately there was not much wind and the sea was tolerably calm, so that we could recognize and, in some degree, control our situation; – yet everything on board appeared given over to stupidity and panic. At last the captain's wife, who was probably the most collected individual on board, called my name loudly, and in the presence of officers and crew, who by this time were generally crowded on the quarter-deck, entreated me to save her ship!

Of course, I sprang to duty. Every sail was clewed up, while the anchors were weighed to prevent our thumping on them. I next ordered the boats to be lowered; and, taking a crew in one, directed the captain to embark in another to seek an escape from our perilous trap. At daylight, we ascertained that we had crossed the edge of the reef at high water, yet it would be useless to attempt to force her back, as she was already half a foot buried in the soft and mushy outcroppings of coral.

Soon after sunrise, we beheld, at no great distance, one of those low sandy keys which are so well known to West Indian navigators; while, further in the distance, loomed up the blue and beautiful outline of the highlands of Cuba. The sea was not much ruffled by swell or waves; but as we gazed at the key, which we supposed deserted, we saw a boat suddenly shoot from behind one of its points and approach our wreck. The visitors were five in number; their trim, beautiful boat was completely furnished with fishing implements, and four of the hands spoke Spanish only, while the *patron*, or master, addressed us in French. The whole crew were dressed in flannel shirts, the skirts of which were belted by a leather strap over their trousers, and when the wind suddenly dashed the flannel aside, I saw they had long knives concealed beneath it.

The *patron* of these fellows offered to aid us in lightening the galliot and depositing the cargo on the key; where, he said, there was a hut in which he would guarantee the safety of our merchandise until, at the full of the moon, we could float the vessel from the reef. He offered, moreover, to pilot us out of harm's way; and, for all his services in salvage, we were to pay him a thousand dollars.

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While the master was busy making terms, his companions were rummaging the galliot in order to ascertain our cargo and armament. It was finally agreed by the captain and his petticoat commodore, that if, by evening and the return of tide, our galliot would not float, we would accept the wreckers' offer; and, accordingly, I was ordered to inform them of the resolution.

As soon as I stated our assent, the *patron* suddenly assumed an air of deliberation, and insisted that the money should be paid in hard cash on the spot, and not by drafts on Havana, as originally required. I thought the demand a significant one, and hoped the joint partners would neither yield nor admit their ability to do so; but, unfortunately, they assented at once. The nod and wink I saw the *patron* immediately bestow on one of his companions satisfied me of the imprudence of the concession and the justice of my suspicions.

The fishermen departed to try their luck on the sea, promising to be back at sunset, on their way to the island. We spent the day in fruitless efforts to relieve the galliot or to find a channel, so that when the Spaniards returned in the afternoon with a rather careless reiteration of their proposal, our captain, with some eagerness, made his final arrangements for the cargo's discharge early next morning. Our skipper had visited the key in the course of the day, and finding the place of deposit apparently safe, and everything else seemingly honest, he was anxious that the night might pass in order that the disembarkation might begin.

The calm quiet of that tropic season soon wore away, and, when I looked landward, at day-dawn, I perceived two strange boats at anchor near the key. As this gave me some uneasiness, I mentioned it to the captain and his wife, but they laughed at my suspicions. After an early meal we began to discharge our heaviest cargo with the fishermen's aid, yet we made little progress towards completion by the afternoon. At sunset, accounts were compared, and finding a considerable difference *in favour* of the wreckers, I was despatched ashore to ascertain the error. At the landing I was greeted by several new faces. I particularly observed a Frenchman whom I had not noticed

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before. He addressed me with a courteous offer of refreshments. His manners and language were evidently those of an educated person, while his figure and physiognomy indicated aristocratic habits or birth, yet his features and complexion bore the strong imprint of that premature old age which always marks a dissipated career.

After a delightful chat in my mother-tongue with the pleasant stranger, he invited me to spend the night on shore. I declined politely, and, having rectified the cargo's error, was preparing to re-embark, when the Frenchman once more approached and insisted on my remaining. I again declined, asserting that duty forbade my absence. He then remarked that orders had been left by my countryman the *patron* to detain me, but if I was so obstinate as to go, *I might probably regret it.*

With a laugh, I stepped into my boat, and on reaching the galliot, learned that our skipper had imprudently avowed the rich nature of our cargo.

Before leaving the vessel that night, the *patron* took me aside, and inquired whether I received the invitation to pass the night on the key, and why I had not accepted it? To my great astonishment, he addressed me in pure Italian; and when I expressed gratitude for his offer, he beset me with questions about my country, my parents, my age, my objects in life, and my prospects. Once or twice he threw in the ejaculation of, 'poor boy! poor boy!' As he stepped over the taffrail to enter his boat, I offered my hand, which he first attempted to take – then suddenly stopping, rejected the grasp, and, with an abrupt 'No! addio!' he spun away in his boat from the galliot's side.

I could not help putting these things together in my mind during the glowing twilight. I felt as if walking in a cold shadow; an unconquerable sense of impending danger oppressed me. I tried to relieve myself by discussing the signs with the captain, but the phlegmatic Hollander only scoffed at my suspicions, and bade me sleep off my nervousness.

When I set the first night watch, I took good care to place every case containing valuables *below*, and to order the look-out

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to call all hands at the first appearance or sound of a boat. Had we been provided with arms, I would have equipped the crew with weapons of defence, but, unluckily, there was not on board even a rusty firelock or sabre.

How wondrously calm was all nature that night! Not a breath of air or a ripple on the water! The sky was brilliant with stars, as if the firmament were strewn with silver dust. The full moon, with its glowing disc, hung some fifteen or twenty degrees above the horizon. The intense stillness weighed upon my tired limbs and eyes, while I leaned with my elbows on the taffrail, watching the roll of the vessel as she swung lazily from side to side on the long and weary swell. Everybody but the watch had retired, and I, too, went to my state-room in hope of burying my sorrows in sleep. But the calm night near the land had so completely filled my berth with annoying insects that I was obliged to decamp and take refuge in the stay-sail netting, where, wrapped in the cool canvas, I was at rest in quicker time than I have taken to tell it.

Notwithstanding my nervous apprehension, a sleep more like the torpor of lethargy than natural slumber fell on me at once. I neither stirred nor heard anything till near two o'clock, when a piercing shriek from the deck aroused me. The moon had set, but there was light enough to show the decks abaft filled with men, though I could distinguish neither their persons nor movements. Cries of appeal, and moans as of wounded or dying, constantly reached me. I roused myself as well and quickly as I could from the oppression of my death-like sleep, and tried to shake off the nightmare. The effort assured me that it was reality and not a dream! In an instant that presence of mind which has seldom deserted me suggested escape. I seized the gasket, and dropping by aid of it as softly as I could in the water, struck out for shore. It was time. My plunge into the sea, notwithstanding its caution, had made some noise, and a rough voice called in Spanish to return or I would be shot.

When I began to go to sea, I took pains to become a good

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swimmer, and my acquired skill served well on this occasion. As soon as the voice ceased from the deck, I lay still on the water until I saw a flash from the bow of the galliot, to which I immediately made a complaisant bow by diving deeply. This operation I repeated several times, till I was lost in the distant darkness; nor can I pride myself much on my address in escaping the musket balls, as I have since had my own aim similarly eluded by many a harmless duck.

After swimming about ten minutes, I threw myself on my back to rest and 'take a fresh departure.' It was so dark that I could not see the key, yet, as I still discerned the galliot's masts relieved against the sky, I was enabled by that beacon to steer my way landward. Naked, with the exception of trousers, I had but little difficulty in swimming, so that in less than half an hour I touched the key, and immediately sought concealment in a thick growth of mangroves.

I had not been five minutes in this dismal jungle, when such a swarm of mosquitoes beset me, that I was forced to hurry to the beach and plunge into the water. In this way was I tormented the whole night. At dawn, I retreated once more to the bushes; and climbing the highest tree I found – whose altitude, however, was not more than twelve feet above the sand – I beheld, across the calm sea, the dismantled hull of my late home, surrounded by a crowd of boats, which were rapidly filling with plundered merchandise. It was evident that we had fallen a prey to pirates; yet I could not imagine why I had been singled from this scene of butchery, to receive the marks of anxious sympathy that were manifested by the *patron* and his French companion on the key. All the morning I continued in my comfortless position, watching their movements – occasionally refreshing my parched lips by chewing the bitter berries of the thicket. Daylight, with its heat, was as intolerable as night, with its venom. The tropical sun and the glaring reflection from a waveless sea, poured through the calm atmosphere upon my naked flesh like boiling oil. My thirst was intense. As the afternoon wore away, I observed several boats tow the lightened hull of our galliot south-east of the key till it

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disappeared behind a point of the island. Up to that moment, my manhood had not forsaken me; but, as the last timber of my vessel was lost to sight, nature resumed its dominion. Every hope of seeing my old companions was gone; I was utterly alone.

## CHAPTER THREE



So passed the day. As the sun sank in the west, I began to reflect about obtaining the rest for mind and body I so much needed. My system was almost exhausted by want of food and water, while the dreadful tragedy of the preceding night shattered my nerves far more than they ever suffered amid the trying scenes I have passed through since. It was my *first* adventure of peril and of blood; and my soul shrank with the natural recoil that virtue experiences in its earliest encounter with flagrant crime.

In order to escape the incessant torment of insects, I had just determined to bury my naked body in the sand, and to cover my head with the only garment I possessed, when I heard a noise in the neighbouring bushes, and perceived a large and savage dog rushing rapidly from side to side, with his nose to the ground, evidently in search of game or prey. I sprang to my friendly perch just in time to save myself from his fangs. The foiled and ferocious beast, yelling with rage, gave an alarm which was responded to by other dogs, three of which – followed by two armed men – promptly made their appearance beneath my tree. The hunters were not surprised at finding me, as, in truth, I was the game they sought. Ordering me down, I was commanded to march slowly before them, and especially warned to make no attempt at flight, as the bloodhounds would tear me to pieces on the spot. I told my guard that I should of course manifest no such folly as to attempt an escape from *caballeros* like themselves – upon a desolate sand key half a mile wide – especially when my alternative refuge could only be found among the fish of the sea. The self-possession and good-humour with which I replied, seemed somewhat to mollify the cross-grained savages, and we soon approached a habitation, where I was ordered to sit down until the whole party assembled. After a while, I was invited to join them in their evening meal.

The piquant stew upon which we fed effectually loosened their tongues, so that, in the course of conversation, I discovered my pursuers had been in quest of me since early morning,

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though it was hardly believed I had either escaped the shot or swam fully a mile amid sharks during the darkness. Upon this, I ventured to put some ordinary questions, but was quickly informed that inquisitiveness was considered unwholesome on the sand keys about Cuba!

At sunset, the whole piratical community of the little isle was assembled. It consisted of two parties, each headed by its respective chief. Both gangs were apparently subject to the leadership of the *rancho's* proprietor; and in this man I recognized the *patron* who inquired so minutely about my biography and prospects. His companions addressed him either as 'El señor patron' or 'Don Rafael.' I was surveyed very closely by the picturesque group of bandits, who retired into the interior of the *rancho*—a hut made of planks and sails rescued from wrecks. My guard or sentinel consisted of but a single vagabond, who amused himself by whetting a long knife on a hone, and then trying its sharpness on a single hair and then on his finger. Sometimes the scoundrel made a face at me, and drew the back of his weapon across his throat.

The conversation within, which I felt satisfied involved my fate, was a long one. I could distinctly overhear the murmuring roar of talk, although I could not distinguish words. One sentence, however, did not escape me: '*Los muertos*,' said the French dandy, '*no hablan*,' – Dead men tell no tales!

It is hard to imagine a situation more trying for a young, hearty, and hopeful man. I was half naked; my skin was excoriated by the sun, sand, and salt water; four bloodhounds were at my feet ready to fasten on my throat at the bidding of a *desperado*; a piratical sentry, knife in hand, kept watch over me while a jury of *buccaneers* discussed my fate within earshot.

The conclave lasted quite an hour without reaching a conclusion. At length, after an unusual clamour, the *patron* Rafael rushed from the *rancho* with a horseman's pistol, and, calling my name, whirled me behind him in his strong and irresistible grasp. Then facing both bands, with a terrible imprecation, he swore vengeance if they persisted in requiring the death of his *nephew*.

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At the mention of the word 'nephew,' everyone paused with a look of surprise, and drawing near the excited man with expressions of interest, agreed to respect his new-found relative, though they insisted I should swear never to disclose the occurrence of which I had been an unwilling witness. I complied with the condition unhesitatingly, and shook hands with everyone present except the sentry, of whom I shall have occasion to speak hereafter.

It is astonishing what revulsions of manner, if not of feeling, take place suddenly among the class of men with whom my lot had now been cast. Ten minutes before, they were greedy for my blood, not on account of personal malice, but from utter recklessness of life whenever an individual interfered with their personal hopes or tenure of existence. Each one of these outlaws now vied with his companions in finding articles to cover my nakedness and make me comfortable. As soon as I was clothed, supper was announced and I was given almost a seat of honour at a table plentifully spread with fresh fish, sardines, olives, ham, cheese, and an abundance of capital claret.

The chat naturally turned upon me, and some sly jokes were uttered at the expense of Rafael, concerning the kinsman who had suddenly sprung up like a mushroom out of this pool of blood.

'*Caballeros!*' interposed Rafael passionately, 'you seem inclined to doubt my word. Perhaps you are no longer disposed to regard me as your chief? We have broken bread together during four months; we have shared the same dangers and divided our spoils fairly: am I *now* to be charged to my face with a lie?' 'Ha!' said he, rising from the table and striding through the apartment with violent gestures, 'who dares doubt my word, and impute to me the meanness of a lie? Are ye drunk? Can this wine have made you mad?' and seizing a bottle, he dashed it to the ground, stamping with rage.

This sounds very melodramatically, yet my experience has taught me that it is precisely a bold and dashing tone of bravado, adopted at the right moment, which is always most successful among *such* ruffians as surrounded my preserver. The speech was delivered with such genuine vehemence and resolution that

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no one could question his sincerity or suppose him acting. But, as soon as he was gone, the leader of the other gang, who had been very unconcernedly smoking his cigar, and apparently punctuating Don Rafael's oration with his little puffs, advanced to my new uncle, and laying his hand on his arm, said:

'*Amigo*, you take a joke too seriously. No one here desires to harm the boy or disbelieve you. Take my advice, calm yourself, light a *cigarillo*, drink a tumbler of claret, and drop the subject.'

But this process of pacification was too rapid for my excited uncle. Men of his quality require to be let down gradually from their wrath, for I have frequently noticed that when their object is too easily gained, they interpose obstacles and start new subjects of controversy, so that the most amiable and yielding temper may at last become inflamed to passionate resistance.

'No, *caballeros!*' exclaimed Don Rafael, 'I will neither light a *cigarillo*, drink claret, calm myself, nor accept satisfaction for this insult, short of the self-condemnation you will all experience for a mean suspicion, when I *prove* the truth of my assertions about this boy. A doubted man has no business at the head of such fellows as you are. Begone out of my hearing, Theodore,' continued he, pointing to the canvas door, 'begone till I convince these people that I am your uncle!'

As soon as I was out of the chamber, I afterwards learned that Rafael announced my name, place of birth, and parentage to the wreckers, and desired the other *patron*, Mesclet, who spoke Italian, to follow and interrogate me as to his accuracy.

Mesclet performed the service in a kind manner, opening the interview by asking the names of my father and mother, and then demanding how many uncles I had on my mother's side. My replies appeared satisfactory.

'Was one of your uncles a navy officer?' inquired Mesclet. 'And where is he at present?' The only uncle I had in the navy, I declared, had long been absent from his family. But once in my life had I seen him, and that was while on his way to Marseilles, in 1815, to embark for the Spanish Main; since then no intelligence of the wanderer had reached my ears.

Mesclet's report gave perfect satisfaction to the scoffers, and

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the mysterious drama at once established me in a position I could not have attained even by desperate services to the *filibusteros*. A bumper, all round, closed the night; and each slunk off to his cot or blanket beneath a mosquito bar, while the bloodhounds were chained at the door to do double duty as sentinels and body guard.

I threw myself down thankfully, but I could not rest. Sore and tired as I was, I could not compose my mind to sleep. The conduct of Rafael surprised me. I could not imagine how he became familiar with my biography, nor could I identify his personal appearance with my uncle who went so long before to South America. A thousand fancies jumbled themselves in my brain, and, in their midst, I fell into slumber. Yet my self-oblivion was broken and short. My pulse beat wildly, but my skin did not indicate the heat of fever. The tragedy of the galliot was reacted before me. Phantoms of the butchered wife and men, streaming with blood, stood beside my bed, while a chorus of devils, in the garb of sailors, shouted that *I* was the cause of the galliot's loss, and of their murder. Then the wretched woman would hang round my neck, and crawl on my breast, besprinkling me with gore that spouted from her eyeless sockets, imploring me to save her; till, shrieking and panting, I awoke from the horrible nightmare. Such were the dreams that haunted my pillow nearly all the time I was forced to remain with these desperadoes.

I thanked God that the night of the tropics was so brief. The first glimmer of light found me up, and as soon as I could find a companion to control the hounds, I ran to the sea for refreshment by a glorious surf-bath. I was on a miserable sand-bar, whose surface was hardly covered with soil; yet, in that prolific land of rain and sunshine, nature seems only to require the slightest footing to assert her magnificent power of vegetation. In spots, along the arid island, were the most beautiful groves of abundant undergrowth, matted with broad-leaved vines, while, within their shadow, the fresh herbage sprang up, sparkling with morning dew. In those climates, the blaze of

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noon is a season of oppressive languor, but morning and evening with their dawn and twilight, their lengthened shadows and declining sun, are draughts of beauty that have often intoxicated less enthusiastic tempers than mine. The bath, the breeze, the renewed nature, aroused and restored a degree of tone to my shattered nerves, so that when I reached the *rancho*, I was ready for any duty that might be imposed. The twin gangs had gone off in their boats soon after daylight, with saws and axes; but Rafael left orders with my brutal sentry that I should assist him in preparing breakfast, which was to be ready by eleven o'clock.

I never knew the real patronymic of this fellow, who was a Spaniard, and passed among us by the nickname of Gallego. Gallego possessed a good figure, symmetrical and strong, while it was lithe and active. But his head and face were the most repulsive I ever encountered. The fellow was not absolutely ugly, so far as mere contour of features was concerned; but there was so dropsical a bloat in his cheeks, such a stagnant sallowness in his complexion, such a watching scowl in his eyes, such a drawling sullenness of speech, such sensuality in the turn of his resolute lips, that I trembled to know he was to be my daily companion. His dress and skin denoted slovenly habits, while a rude and growling voice gave token of the bitter heart that kept the enginery of the brute in motion.

I found that a fire had been already kindled beneath some dwarf trees, and that a kettle was set over it to boil. Gallego beckoned me to follow him into a thicket some distance from the *rancho*, where, beneath the protection of a large tarpaulin, we found the *filibustero's* pantry amply provided with butter, onions, spices, salt-fish, bacon, lard, rice, coffee, wines, and all the requisites of comfortable living. In the corners, strewn at random on the ground, I observed spy-glasses, compasses, sea-charts, books, and a quantity of choice cabin-furniture. We obtained a sufficiency of water for cookery and drinking from holes dug in the sand, and we managed to cool the beverage by suspending it in a draft of air in porous vessels, which are known throughout the West Indies by the name of 'monkeys.' Our

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copious thickets supplied us with fuel, nor were we without a small, rough garden, in which the gang cultivated peppers, tomatoes and mint. The premises being reviewed, I returned with my ill-favoured guard to take a lesson in piratical cookery.

It is astonishing how well these wandering vagabonds know how to toss up a savoury mess, and how admirably they understand its enjoyment. A tickled palate is one of the great objects of their mere animal existence, and they are generally prepared with a mate who might pass muster in a second-rate restaurant. The *déjeuner* we served of codfish stewed in claret, snowy and granulated rice, delicious tomatoes and fried ham, was irreproachable. Coffee had been drunk at day dawn; so that my comrades contented themselves during the meal with liberal potations of claret, while they finished the morning with brandy and cigars.

By two o'clock the breakfast was over, and most of the gorged scamps had retired for a siesta during the sweltering heat. A few of the toughest took muskets and went to the beach to shoot gulls or sharks. Gallego and myself were despatched to our grove-kitchen to scullionize our utensils; and finally, being the youngest, I was entrusted with the honourable duty of feeding the bloodhounds.

As soon as my duties were over, I was preparing to follow the siesta-example of my betters when I met Don Rafael coming out of the door, and, without a word, was beckoned to follow towards the interior of the island. When we reached a solitary spot, two or three hundred yards from the *rancho*, Rafael drew me down beside him in the shade of a tree, and said gently with a smile, that he supposed I was at least *surprised* by the events of the last four days.

'Well,' continued he, 'I have brought you here to explain a part of the mystery, and especially to let you understand why it was that I passed myself off last night as your uncle, in order to save your life. I was obliged to do it, boy; and, *voto à Dios!* I would have fought the *junta* – bloodhounds and all – before they should have harmed a limb of your body!'

Don Rafael explained that as soon as he caught a glimpse of

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my face when he boarded the galliot on the morning of our disaster, he recognized the lineaments of an old companion in arms. The resemblance caused him to address me as particularly as he had done on the night of the piracy, the consequence of which was that his suspicions ripened into certainty.

If I were writing the story of Don Rafael's life, instead of my own, I might give an interesting and instructive narrative, which showed – as he alleged – how those potent controllers of outlaws – ‘circumstances’ – had changed him from a very respectable soldier of fortune into a genuine buccaneer. He asserted that my uncle had been his schoolmate and professional companion in the old world. When the war of South American independence demanded aid to help its fortune, Don Rafael and my uncle had lent the revolutionists of Mexico their swords, for which they were repaid in the coin that ‘patriots’ commonly receive for such self-sacrifice. Republics are proverbially ungrateful, and Mexico, alas! was a republic.

After many a buffet of fortune, my poor uncle, it seems, perished in a duel at which Don Rafael performed the professional part of ‘his friend.’ My relation died, of course, like a ‘man of honour,’ and soon after, Don Rafael himself fell a victim to the ‘circumstances’ which, in the end, enabled him to slaughter my shipmates and save my life.

I think I perceived certain spasms of conscience during our interview, which proved that, among the lees of that withered heart, there were some rich drops of manhood ready to mantle his cheek with shame at our surroundings. Indeed, as he disclosed his story, he exhibited several outbursts of passionate agony which satisfied me that if Don Rafael were in Paris, Don Rafael would have been a most respectable *bourgeois*; while, doubtless, there were many estimable citizens at that moment in Paris who would have given up their shops in order to become Don Rafaels in Cuba! Such is life – and ‘circumstances!’

Our chat wasted a large portion of the afternoon. It was terminated by a counsel from my friend to be wary in my deportment, and a direction to console myself with the idea that he did not mean I should tarry long upon the island.

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'You see,' said he, 'that I do not lack force of eye, voice, and personal influence over these ruffians; yet I do not know that I can always serve or save a friend, so your fate hangs very much on your circumspection. Men in our situation are Ishmaelites. Our hands are not only against all, and all against us, but we do not know the minute when we may be all against each other. The power of habitual control may do much for a leader among such men; but such an one must neither quail nor *deceive*. Let none of your actions mar my projects. Let them never suspect the truth of our consanguinity. Call me 'uncle'; and in my mouth you shall always be 'Theodore.' Ask no questions; be civil, cheerful, and serviceable about the *rancho*; never establish an intimacy, confidence, or friendship with any *one* of the band; stifle your feelings and your tears if you ever find them rising to your lips or eyes; talk as little as you possibly can; avoid that smooth-tongued Frenchman; keep away from our revels, and refrain entirely from wine.

'I charge you to be specially watchful of Gallego, the cook. He is our man of dirty work – a shameless coward, though revengeful as a cat. If it shall ever happen that you come in collision with him, *strike first and well*; no one cares for him; even his death will make no stir. Take this *cuchillo*, it is sharp and reliable; keep it near you day and night; and, *in self-defence*, do not hesitate to make good use of it. In a few days, I may say more to you; until then – *corragio, figlio, è addio!*'

We returned to the *rancho* by different paths.

## CHAPTER FOUR



THE life of men under the ban of society, on a desolate sand key, whose only visitors are land-crabs and sea-gulls, is a dull and dreary affair. The genuine pirate, properly equipped for a desperate lot, who has his swift keel beneath him and is wafted wheresoever he lists on canvas wings, encounters, it is true, an existence of peril; yet there is something exhilarating and romantic in his dashing career of incessant peril: he is ever on the wing, and ever amid novelty; there is something about his life that smacks of genuine warfare, and his existence becomes as much more respectable as the old-fashioned highwayman on his mettlesome steed was superior to the sneaking footpad, who leaped from behind a thicket and bade the unarmed pedestrian stand and deliver. But the wrecker-pirate takes his victim at a disadvantage, for he is not a genuine freebooter of the sea. He shuns an able foe and strikes the crippled. Like the shark and the eagle, he delights to prey on the carcass rather than to strike the living quarry.

The companionship into which misfortune had thrown me was precisely of this character, and I gladly confess that I was never tempted for a moment to bind up my fate with the sorry gang. I confided, it is true, in Rafael's promise to liberate me; yet I never abandoned the hope of escape by my own tact and energy.

Meanwhile, I became heartily tired of my scullion duties as the subordinate of Gallego. Finding one day a chest of carpenters' tools among the rubbish, I busied myself in making a rudder for one of the boats, and so well did I succeed, that when my companions returned to breakfast from their daily 'fishing,' my mechanical skill was lauded to such a degree that Rafael converted the general enthusiasm to my advantage by separating me from the cook. I was raised to the head of our 'naval bureau' as boatbuilder in chief. Indeed, it was admitted on all hands that I was abler with the adze than the ladle and spoiled fewer boards than broths.

A few days passed, during which I learned that our unfor-

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tunate galliot was gradually emptied and destroyed. This was the usual morning occupation of the whole gang until the enterprise ended. When the job was over Don Rafael told me that he was about to depart hurriedly on business with the whole company, to the mainland of Cuba, so that, during his absence, the island and its property would be left in custody of Gallego, myself, and the bloodhounds. He specially charged the cook to keep sober, and to give a good account of himself at the end of *five days*, which would terminate his absence.

But no sooner was the *patron* away than the lazy scamp neglected his duties, skulked all day among the bushes, and refused even to furnish my food or supply the dogs. Of course, I speedily attended to the welfare of myself and the animals; but, at night, the surly Galician came home, prepared his own supper, drank till he was completely drunk, and retired without uttering a word.

I was glad that he yielded to the temptation of liquor, as I hoped he would thereby become incapable of harming me during the watches of the night, if weariness compelled me to sleep. He was a malignant wretch, and his taciturnity and ill-will appeared so ominous now that I was left utterly alone, that I resolved, if possible, to keep awake, and not to trust to luck or liquor. The galliot's tragedy and anxiety stood me in stead, so that I did not close my eyes in sleep the whole of that dreary vigil. About midnight, Gallego stealthily approached my cot, and pausing a moment to assure himself that I was in the profound repose which I admirably feigned, he turned on tip-toe to the door of our cabin, and disappeared with a large bundle in his hand. He did not return until near day dawn; and, next night, the same act was exactly repeated.

The mysterious sullenness of this vagabond not only alarmed but increased my nervousness, for, on a desolate island, without a companion but a single outcast, one would rather hear the sound of that wretch's voice than be doomed to the silence of such inhuman solitude. During the day he kept entirely aloof – generally at sea fishing – affording me time for a long siesta in a nook near the shore, penetrated by a thorny path, which

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Gallego could not have traced without hounds. On the fourth night, when the pirate left our hut for his accustomed excursion, I resolved to follow; and taking a pistol with renewed priming, I pursued his steps at a safe distance, till I saw him enter a thick shrubbery, in which he was lost. I marked the spot and returned to the cabin. Next morning, after coffee, Gallego departed in his canoe to fish. I watched him anxiously from the beach until he anchored about two miles from the reef, and then calling the dogs, retraced my way to the thicket. The hounds were of great service, for, having placed them on the track, they instantly traced the path of the surly scoundrel.

After some trouble in passing the dense copse of underwood, I entered a large patch of naked sand, broken by heaps of stones, which appeared to cover graves. One heap bore the form of a cross, and was probably the sepulchre of a wrecker. I stopped awhile and reflected as to further explorations. On entering this arid graveyard, I observed a number of land-crabs scamper away; but, after awhile, when I sat down in a corner and became perfectly quiet, I noticed that the army returned to the field and introduced themselves into all the heaps of stones or graves *save one*. This struck me as singular; for, when people are so hopelessly alone as I was, they become minute observers, and derive infinite happiness from the consideration of the merest trifles. Accordingly, I ventured close to the abandoned heap, and found at once that the neighbouring sand had been freshly smoothed. I was on Gallego's track! In dread of detection, I stealthily climbed a tree, and, screening myself behind the foliage, peered out towards the sea till I beheld the cook at work beyond the reef. My musket and pistols were again examined and found in order. With these precautions, I began to remove the stones, taking care to mark their relative positions so that I might replace them exactly; and, in about ten minutes' work at excavation, I came upon two barrels, one of which was filled with bundles of silk, linens, and handkerchiefs, while the other contained a chronometer, several pieces of valuable lace, and a beautifully bound, gilt, and ornamented *Bible*. One bundle, tied in a Madras handkerchief, particularly attracted my

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attention, for I thought I recognized the covering. Within it I found a number of trinkets belonging to the wife of my Dutch captain, and a large hairpin, set with diamonds, which I remember she wore the last day of her life. Had this wretch torn it from her head, as he imbrued his hands in her blood on that terrible night? The painful revelation brought all before me once more with appalling force. I shuddered and became sick. Yet, I had no time for maudlin dalliance with my feelings. Replacing everything with precision, and smoothing the sand once more with my flannel shirt, I returned to the *rancho*, where I indulged in the boyish but honest outburst of nature which I could no longer restrain. I was not then – and, thank God, I am not now – a stranger to tears!

Just before sunset of this day, the deep baying of our hounds gave notice of approaching strangers; and, soon after, four boats appeared in the cove. The two foremost belonged to Don Rafael and his crew, while the others were filled with strangers whose appearance was that of landsmen rather than mariners. As Rafael received them on the beach, he introduced them to me as the ‘Amphibious Jews.’

Our delicious supper of that night was augmented by a fine store of beef, pork and fowls, brought from shore. I lingered at table as long as the company maintained a decent sobriety, and learned that these saltwater Hebrews were, in truth, speculators from Cardenas, who accompanied Rafael in the guise of fishermen, to purchase the plundered cargo of my galliot.

During his visit to Cuba, Don Rafael was apprised that the Cuban authorities were about sending an inspector among the islands off the coast, and accordingly took precaution to furnish himself in advance with a regular ‘fishing licence.’ All hands were forthwith set to work to make our key and *rancho* conform to this calling, and, in a few days, the canvas roof of our hut was replaced by a thatch of leaves, while every dangerous article or implement was concealed in the thicket of a labyrinthine creek. In fact, our piscatory character could not be doubted. In our persons and occupation, we looked as innocent and rustic

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as a picnic party on a summer bivouac for fresh air and salt bathing. Nor was the transformation less real in regard to our daily tasks. We became, in reality, most industrious fishermen; so that we had more than a thousand of the finny tribe piled up and dried when the hounds signalled the arrival of the expected officials.

Breakfast was on the table when they landed, but it was the *banyan* meal of humble men, whose nets were never filled with aught but the *scaly* products of the sea. Our inspector was regaled with a scant fish-feast, and allowed to digest it over the genuine licence. Rafael complained sadly of hard times and poverty; in fact, the drama of humility was played to perfection, and, finally, the functionary signed our licence, with a certificate of our loyalty, and pocketed a moderate gratification.

Six long, hot, and wretched weeks passed over my head before any striking occurrence relieved the monotony of my life. During the whole of this period, our fishing adventure was steadily pursued, when information was mysteriously brought to the key that a richly laden French vessel had run ashore on the Cayo Verde, an islet some forty miles east of the Cruz del Padre. That afternoon, both of our large boats were filled with armed men, and, as they departed with *every* wrecker aboard, I alone was left on the islet to guard our property with the dogs.

The thought and hope of escape both swelled in my breast as I saw the hulls dwindle to a dot and disappear behind the horizon. In a moment, my plan was conceived and perfected. The sea was perfectly smooth, and I was expert in the use of oars. That very night I launched our canoe – the only vessel left in the cove – and placing the sail, scullers, and grappling-hook within it, returned to the *rancho* for clothing. As it was dark, I lighted a candle, when, on looking into the clothes-chest beneath my bed, I found inscribed on the lid, in fresh chalk-marks, the words ‘Patience! Wait!’

This discovery made me pause in my preparations. Was it the warning – as it was certainly the handwriting – of Rafael? Had he purposely and honourably left me alone, in order to

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escape this scene of blood? Did he anticipate my effort to fly, and endeavour to save me from the double risk of crossing to the mainland, and of future provision for my comfort? I could not doubt its being the work of my friend; and, whether it was superstition or prudence, I cannot say, but I resolved, unhesitatingly, to abandon a scheme in regard to which I hesitated. Instead, therefore, of attempting to pass the strait between the key and Cuba, I went to bed, and slept more comfortably in my utter abandonment than I had done since I was on the island.

Next day, at noon, I descried a small pilot-boat sailing inside the reef, with all the confidence of a perfect master of the channel. Two persons speedily landed, with provisions from the mainland, and stated that, on his last visit to Cuba, Don Rafael engaged them to take me to Havana. This, however, was to be done with much caution, inasmuch as his men would not assent to my departure until they had compromised my life with theirs by some act of desperate guilt. The pilots declined taking me then without my guardian's assent; and, in truth, so fully was I convinced of his intention to liberate me in the best and speediest way, that I made up my mind to abide where I was till he returned.

For three days more I was doomed to solitude. On the fourth, the boats came back, with the pilot's cutter, and I quickly saw that a serious encounter had taken place. The pilot-boat appeared to be deeply laden. Next day, she was taken to the mazes of the winding and wooded creek, where, I learned, the booty was disembarked and hidden. While the party had gone to complete this portion of their enterprise, the Frenchman, who was wounded in the head and remained behind, took that opportunity to enlighten me on passing events. When the wreckers reached Cayo Verde, they found the French vessel already taken possession of by 'fishermen' of that quarter. Anticipated in their dirty work, our comrades were in no mood to be sociable with the fortunate party. An affray was the natural result, in which knives had been freely used, while Mesplet himself had been rescued by Rafael, pistol in hand, after receiving the violent blow on his head from which he was

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now suffering. Having secured a retreat to their boats, they were just beginning to think of a rapid departure when the friendly pilot-boat hove in sight. So fortunate a reinforcement renewed our gang. A plan of united action was quickly concerted. The French vessel was again boarded and carried. Two of the opposite party were slain in the onslaught; and, finally, a rich remnant of the cargo was seized, though the greater part of the valuables had, no doubt, been previously despatched ashore by the earlier band of desperadoes.

'Thank God!' added the narrator, 'we have now the boat and the assistance of Bachicha, who is as brave as Rafael: with his 'Baltimore clipper,' we shall conduct our affairs on a grander scale than heretofore. *Sacre-bleu!* we may now cruise under the Columbian flag!'

In fact, the 'clipper' had brought down an ample store of ammunition, under the innocent name of 'provisions,' while she carried in her bowels a long six, which she was ready to mount amidships at a moment's notice.

But poor Mesclet did not live to enjoy the fruits of the larger piracy, which he hoped to carry on in a more elegant way with Bachicha. The *roué* could not be restrained from the favourite beverages of his beautiful France. His wound soon mastered him; and, in a month, all that was mortal of this gallant Gaul, who, in earlier years, had figured in the best saloons of his country, rested among sand-graves of a Cuban key.

'Ah!' growled Gallego, as they came home from his burial, 'there is one less to share our earnings; and, what is better, claret and brandy will be more plentiful now that this sponge is under the sand!'

In a few days, the boats were laden with fish for the mainland, in order to cover the real object of our *patron's* visit to Cuba, which was to dispose of the booty. At his departure, he repeated the cherished promise of liberty, and privately hinted that I had better continue fishing on good terms with Señor Gallego.

It required some time to repair the nets, for they had been

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rather neglected during our late fishing, so that it was not, in fact, until Rafael had been three days gone that I took the canoe with Gallego, and dropped anchor outside the reef, to take breakfast before beginning our labour.

We had hardly begun a frugal meal when, suddenly, a large schooner shot from behind a bend of the island, and steered in our direction. As the surly Spaniard never spoke, I had become accustomed to be equally silent. Unexpectedly, however, he gave a scowling glance from beneath his shaggy brows at the vessel, and exclaimed with unusual energy: 'A Columbian privateer!'

'We had best up anchor, and get inside the reef,' continued he, 'or our sport will be spoiled for the day.'

'Pshaw!' returned I, 'she's not making for us, and, even if she were, I wouldn't be such a coward as to run!' Indeed, I had heard so much of 'Columbian privateers' and the patriot service that I rather longed to be captured, that I might try my hand at lawful war and glory. The impulse was sudden and silly.

Still Gallego insisted on retreating; until, at length, we got into an angry controversy, which the cook, who was in the bow of the boat, attempted to end by cutting the anchor-rope. As he was drawing his knife to execute this purpose, I swiftly lifted an oar, and, with a single blow, laid him senseless in the bottom of the canoe. By this time the schooner was within pistol-shot; and, as she passed with a three-knot breeze, the captain, who had witnessed the scene, threw a grappling-iron into our skiff, and taking us in tow, dragged the boat from its moorings.

As soon as we got into deeper water, I was ordered on deck, while Gallego, still quite insensible, was hoisted carefully on board. I told the truth as to our dispute, reserving, however, the important fact that I had been originally urged into the quarrel by my anxiety 'to ship' on board a privateer.

'I want a pilot for Key West,' said the master hurriedly, 'and I have no time to trifle with your stupid quarrels. Can either of you perform this service?'

By this time Gallego had been somewhat roused from his

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stupor, and pointing feebly towards me, uttered a languid: 'Yes, and an *excellent* one.'

Mistaking the word '*pilote*,' which in Spanish signifies 'navigator,' the French captain, who spoke the Castilian very badly, translated it into the more limited meaning.

'*Bon!*' said the master, 'put the other fellow back into his skiff, and make sail at once under charge of this youngster.'

I protested, declaimed, swore, that I knew nothing of Key West and its approaches; but all my efforts were vain. I was a pilot in spite of myself.

The malicious cook enjoyed the joke of which I had so hastily become the victim. As they lowered him again into the boat, he jeered at my incredulity, and in ten minutes was towed to the edge of the reef, where the scamp was turned adrift to make for the island.

When the schooner was once more under full sail, I was ordered to give the course for Key West. I at once informed the captain, whose name I understood to be Laminé, that he really laboured under a mistake in translating the Spanish *pilote* into *port guide*, and assured him that Gallego had been prompted by a double desire to get rid of him as well as me by fostering his pernicious error. I acknowledged that I was a '*pilot*,' or 'navigator,' though not a '*practico*,' or harbour-pilot; yet I urged that I could not, without absolute foolhardiness, undertake to conduct his schooner into a port of which I was utterly ignorant, and had never visited. Hereupon the first lieutenant or mate interposed.

'He is a liar, Captain Laminé, and only wants to extort money for his services,' interjected the brute. 'Leave him to me, sir; I'll find a way to refresh his memory of Key West that will open the bottom of the gulf to his eyes as clearly as the pathway to his piratical hut on the sand-key! To the helm, sir - to the helm!'

What possible object or result could I gain by resistance amid the motley assemblage that surrounded me on the deck of the *Cara-bobo*? She was a craft of about 200 tons; and, with her crew of seventy-five, composed of the scourings of all nations,

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castes and colours, bore a commission from the authorities of Carthagena to burn, sink and destroy all Spanish property she was strong enough to capture. Laminé was born in the isle of France, while Lasquetti, the lieutenant, was a creole of Pensacola. The latter spoke French and Spanish quite well, but very little English; while both master and mate were almost entirely ignorant of navigation, having entrusted that task to the third lieutenant, who was then ill with yellow fever. The second lieutenant was absent on board a prize.

Thus forced to take charge of a privateer without a moment's warning, I submitted with the best grace, and calling for charts and instruments, I shaped my way for the destined port. All day we steered west-north-west, but at sunset, as we had run along smartly, I ordered the schooner to be 'laid to' for the night. The wind and weather were both charmingly fair, and objections were of course made to my command. But, as the most difficult part of our navigation was to be encountered during the night, if I kept on my course, I resolved to persist to the last in my resolution, and I was fortunate enough to carry my point.

'D - n you,' said Lasquetti, as the vessel was brought to the wind and made snug for the night, 'this laying-to shall give *you* no rest, at least, if you thought to dodge work, and get into a hammock by means of it! You shall march the deck all night to see that we don't drift on a reef, if I have to watch you!'

Obedience had been the order of the day with me for a long while; so I promenaded the lee quarter till nearly midnight, when, utterly exhausted by fatigue, I sat down on a long brass chaser, and almost instantly fell asleep.

I know not how long I rested, but a tremendous shock knocked me from the cannon and laid me flat on the deck, bleeding from mouth, nose and ears. Lasquetti stood beside me, cigar in hand, laughing immoderately, blaspheming like a demon, and kicking me in the ribs with his rough wet-weather boots. He had detected me asleep, and touched off the gun with his havanal

The explosion aroused all hands, and brought the com-

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mander on deck. My blood flowed, but it did not pour fast enough to relieve my agonizing rage. As soon as I recovered consciousness, I seized the first heavy implement I could grasp, and rushed at my aggressor, whose skull was saved from the blow by descending beneath the cornings of the hatchway, which, the instant after, were shivered by my weapon. Laminé was a man of some sensibility, and, though selfish, as usual with his set, could not avoid at once reprimanding Lasquetti with uncommon severity in presence of his men.

That afternoon I was fortunate enough, by the aid of a good chart, and a sort of navigating instinct, to anchor the *Cara-bobo* in the narrow harbour of Key West. When Laminé went ashore, he ordered me not to leave the schooner, while sentries were placed to prevent boats from boarding or even approaching us. Hardly was the master out of the vessel before two men seized me as I looked at the shore through a telescope. In the twinkling of an eye, I was hurried below and double-ironed; nor would I have received a morsel of food save bread and water during our detention, had I not been secretly fed by some good fellows from the forecabin, who stole to me after dark with the remnant of their rations. This was the cowardly revenge of Lasquetti.

On the third day, Laminé returned, bringing an American pilot for the coast and islands. I was set at liberty as he was seen approaching; and when we got under way on another cruise, I was commanded to do duty as sailing-master, which I promptly refused with spirited indignation, until I received satisfaction from the dastard lieutenant. But this fellow had taken care to forestall me, by assuring Laminé that he never dreamed of securing me until I was caught in the very act of escaping from the schooner!

During a week's cruise of indifferent success with these 'patriots,' I won the kind heart of the American pilot, who heard the story of my late adventures with patience; and, through his influence with the commander, my lot was mitigated, notwithstanding my refusal to do duty. By this time, the third lieutenant was restored to sufficient health to resume the deck.

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He was a native of Spain, and a gallant sailor. Many an hour did he pass beside me, recounting his adventures or listening to mine, until I seemed to win his sympathy, and ensure his assistance for relief from this miserable tyranny.

At length, the schooner's course was shaped for the Cruz del Padre, while I was summoned to the cabin. I perceived at once a singular change for the better in Monsieur Laminé's manner. He requested me to be seated; pressed me to accept a tumbler of claret; inquired about my health, and ended this harmonious overture by saying, that if I would sign a document exonerating him from all charges of compulsory detention or ill-treatment, he would pay me two hundred dollars for my service, and land me again on the key.

I saw that his object in replacing me on the island was to prevent my complaints against his conduct from reaching the ears of a tribunal in a neutral port; and, accordingly, I declined the proposition, demanding, however, to be put on board of any vessel we met, no matter what might be her nationality.

In the end, I discovered that worse consequences might befall me among these ruffians, if I hesitated to take the recompense and sign the paper. In fact, I began to be quite satisfied that, in reality, it was an *escape* to be freed from the privateer, even if I took refuge once more among pirates! So, after a good deal of claret and controversy had been wasted, I signed the document and pocketed the cash.

As the first bars of saffron streaked the east next morning, the reef of the Cruz del Padre hove in sight dead ahead. The third lieutenant presented me at my departure with a set of charts, a spy-glass, a quadrant, and a large bag of clothes; while in the breast of a rich silk waistcoat, he concealed three ounces and a silver watch, which he desired me to wear in honour of him, if ever I was fortunate enough to tread the streets of Havana. Several of the white sailors also offered me useful garments; and a black fellow, who had charge of the boat in which I was sent ashore, forced on me two sovereigns, which he considered a small gratuity to 'a countryman' in distress.

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He hailed from Marblehead, and protested that he knew me in Salem when I was a lad.

As the boat approached the *rancho's* cove, I perceived everybody under arms, and heard Don Rafael command my boatmen, in a loud, imperious voice, to begone, or he would fire. Standing on the thwarts of the boat, I ordered the oarsmen to back water, and leaping into the sea, waist-deep, struggled alone to the beach, calling '*mi tio! mi tio!*' – 'my uncle! Don Rafael!' – who, recognizing my voice and gestures, rushed forward to embrace me. Our boat was then allowed to approach the landing and disburthen itself of the gifts. I thought it best to request my ally from Marblehead to narrate, in as good Spanish or *lingua-franca* as he could press into his service, the whole story of my capture and the conduct of Gallego. This being done, the boat and its crew were despatched aboard with a multitude of Spanish courtesies and the substantial gift of some Chateau Margaux.

After an early supper, I became the lion of the evening, and was requested to give a narrative of my cruise in the 'patriot service.' I noticed that some of the gang looked on me askance with an incredulous air, while others amused themselves by smoking and spitting in a very contemptuous way whenever I reached what I conceived to be a thrilling portion of my story. At its conclusion, I deposited in the hands of Don Rafael my gifts of two hundred dollars and the two sovereigns. This evidence of reciprocity seemed to restore the good temper of my impatient hearers, so that, by the time the *patron* went round the circle, giving each man his share of my earnings – not even omitting Gallego – my credit was almost restored among the gang.

'As for these two pieces of gold, these charts, instruments and clothes,' said Don Rafael, 'they are the property of the youth, and I am sure none of you are mean enough to divide them. The money was another thing. That was *his* earning, as the fishing "*revenue*" is ours; and as he is entitled to a share of what *we* gain, we are entitled to participate in whatever *he* wins. Yet, *amigos*, this is not all. My nephew, *caballeros*, has been

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accused, by one of this party, during his absence, of being not only a contemptible thief, but a traitor and coward. To-night, my boy shall be found guilty or purged of the baseness imputed to him; and, moreover, I apprise you now, that if he is innocent, I shall to-morrow restore him to liberty. His voluntary return was a voucher of honesty; and I doubt whether there is a clever man among you who does not agree with me. Stand forth, Gallego, and charge this youth again with the infamy you heaped on him while he was away.'

But the sullen wretch bowed his head, with a hang-dog look, and rolled his black and bushy skull slowly from side to side, with an air of bullying defiance. Still he remained perfectly silent.

'Stand forth, Gallego, once more, I say!' shouted Don Rafael, stamping with fury and foaming at the mouth; 'stand forth, imp of the devil, and make good your charge, or I'll trice you up to these rafters by your thumbs, and lash you with a cowhide till your stretched skin peels off in ribbons!'

The threat restored Gallego's voice; but he could only say that there was no use in repeating the charges, because the case was prejudged, and all feared Don Rafael and his parasite to such a degree that it was impossible to treat him with justice. 'Yet, look ye, señores, if I can't talk, I can fight. If Don Rafael is ready to meet me, knife in hand, in support of my cause, why, all I have to say is, that I am ready for him and his bastard to boot!'

In a moment, Rafael's knife was out of his belt, and the two sprang forward in a death-struggle, which would doubtless have been a short affair had not the whole party interposed between the combatants and forbidden the fight. In the hurly-burly, Gallego took to his heels and departed.

The scoundrel's escape caused some alarm in the camp, as it was feared he might leave the island, and, turning king's evidence, make the waters of Cuba too hot for the band. Accordingly, all the canoes and boats that night were drawn up on the beach and kept under double watch.

When order was restored in the *rancho*, I learned that I was

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charged by Gallego with having felled him in the boat, with having shipped voluntarily in the privateer, and with returning in the *Cara-bobo's* boats to rob the *rancho* of its valuables!

The first of the allegations I admitted to be true; the second had been disproved by the privateer's boatmen; and as to the third, I at once insisted upon the party's taking torches and accompanying me to the graveyard, where, I told them, they would find – as, in truth, they did – the valuables this villain had charged me with stealing. On our way thither, I recounted the manner in which I detected his infamy.

Next morning we divided into two parties, and taking the dogs, proceeded in chase of the dastard Galician. He was quickly tracked by the hounds and caught asleep, with two empty flasks beside him.

A drum-head court-martial at once convened for his trial, and it was unanimously resolved to chain him to a tree, where he was to be left exposed to the elements until he starved to death. The passive and silent fit had again come over Gallego. I implored that the sentence might be softened, but I was laughed at for my childish pity, and ordered home to the *rancho*. The command to chain him having been executed, the Spanish out-cast was left to his terrible fate. One of the men, out of compassion, secretly conveyed a case of gin to the doomed man, and left it within reach, either to solace his departure from the world or to render him insensible. But his end was speedy. Next morning the guard found him dead, with six empty bottles out of the case. His body was denied the rites of sepulture. It was left lying in chains as he perished, to rot in the sun and be devoured by the insects generated from his decay.

## CHAPTER FIVE

■

WHEN these dreadful scenes were over, Don Rafael took me aside with the pleasant news that the time for my liberation was indeed arrived. He handed me one hundred and twenty-five dollars, which were my share of the proceeds of our lawful fishing. 'Take the money,' said Rafael, with a good deal of feeling; 'there is no blood on it!'

My preparations for departure were quickly made, as Bachicha was in the cove with his craft ready to take me to the mainland. I bade a hasty adieu to the gang; and perhaps it is rare that any one ever abandoned the companions of several months' intimacy with so little pain. Rafael's solicitude for my character touched me. He had done all in his power to preserve my self-respect, and I was, therefore, well disposed to regard the good counsel he gave me at parting, and to believe in his sincerity when he pictured a bright future, and contrasted it with his own desolation and remorse.

'I have recommended you, *hijo mio*, to a friend in Regla, on the opposite side of the harbour at Havana, who will take care of you. He is a *paisano* of ours. Take these additional ten ounces, which are the fruit of honest labour. They will help you to appear properly in Havana; so that, with the care of Bachicha and our Regla countryman, I don't despair of your welfare. *Adios! para siempre!*'

And so we parted; and it was, indeed, an adieu for ever. We never met again, but I heard of Don Rafael and his fortunes. The new enterprise with the pilot-boat turned out successfully, and the band acquired considerable property on the island before the piratical nests along the coast of Cuba were broken up by cruisers. Rafael had some narrow escapes from the noose and the yard-arm; but he eluded the grasp of his pursuers, and died a respectable *ranchero* on a comfortable farm in the interior.

The light winds of summer soon brought us inside the Moro Castle, past the frowning batteries of the Cabanas, and at anchor

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near Regla, within the beautiful harbour of Havana. I hastened to Regla with my letter of introduction, which was *interpreted* by Bachicha to the Italian grocer, the friend of Rafael, to whom I was confided. Carlo Cibo was an illiterate man of kind heart, who had adventurously emigrated from Italy to furnish the Havanese with good things; while, in return, the Havanese had been so pleased with his provender that Carlo may be said to have been a man 'very well-to-do in the world' for a foreigner. He received me with unbounded kindness – welcomed me to his bachelor home – apologized for its cold cheerlessness, and ordered me to consider himself and his *casa* entirely at my disposal as long as I chose to remain.

I was content to accept this unstinted hospitality for a few days, while I ran over the town, the hills, and the *paseos*; but I could not consent to dally long eating the bread of idleness and charity. I observed that my friend Carlo was either the most prudent or least inquisitive man I knew, for he never asked me a question about my early or recent history. As he would not lead the conversation to my affairs, I one day took the liberty to inquire whether there was a vessel in port bound to the Pacific Ocean or Mexico, in which my protector could find a situation for me as an officer, or procure me permission to work my way even as a common sailor.

The kind grocer instantly divined my true motive, and while he honoured me for it, deprecated the idea of my departure. He said that my visit, instead of being a burden, was a pleasure he could not soon replace. As to the expenses of his house, he declared they were, in fact, *not* increased. What fed five, fed half a dozen; and, as to my proposal to go to Mexico, or any other place in Spanish America on the continent, with a view of 'making my fortune,' he warmly protested against it, in consequence of his own experience.

It is strange how our lives and destinies are often decided by trifles. My nautical eye and taste were struck by the trim rig of the sharp built 'slavers,' which, at that time, used to congregate at Havana. There was something bewitching to my

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mind in their racehorse beauty. A splendid vessel has always had the same influence on my mind that I have heard a splendid woman has on the minds of other men. These dashing slavers, with their arrowy hulls and raking masts, got complete possession of my fancy. There was hardly a day that I did not come home with a discovery of added charms. Signor Carlo listened in silence and nodded his head, when I was done, with an approving smile and a '*bueno!*'

I continued my sailing peregrinations for a month around the harbour, when my kind entertainer invited me to accompany him aboard a vessel of which, he said, he owned two shares – *she was bound to Africa*. The splendid clipper was one of the very craft that had won my heart; and my feverish soul was completely upset by the gala-scene as we drifted down the bay, partaking of a famous breakfast, and quaffing bumpers of champagne to the schooner's luck. When she passed the Moro Castle we leaped into our boats, and gave the voyagers three hearty and tipsy cheers. My grocer was a slaver!

My mind was made up. Mexico, Peru, South American independence, patriotism, and all that, were given to the breezes of the gulf. In a few days I was told that my wishes would perhaps be gratified, as a fast vessel from the Canaries was about to be sold; and if she went off a bargain, Carlo had resolved to purchase her, with a friend, to send to Africa.

Accordingly, the Canary *Globo* was acquired for three thousand dollars; and after a perfect refitting, loomed in the harbour as a respectable pilot-boat of forty tons. Her name, in consequence of reputed speed, was changed to *El Areostatico*; a culverine was placed amidships; all the requisites for a slave cargo were put on board; fifteen sailors, the refuse of the press-gang and jail-birds, were shipped; powder, ammunition, and small arms were abundantly supplied; and, last of all, four kegs, ballasted with specie, were conveyed into the cabin to purchase our return cargo.

It was on the 2nd of September 1826 that I bade farewell to Carlo on the deck of the *Areostatico*, cleared for the Cape de Verde Isles, but, in truth, bound for the Rio Pongo. Our crew

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consisted of twenty-one scamps – Spaniards, Portuguese, Frenchmen, and mongrels. The Majorcan captain was an odd character to entrust with such an enterprise, and probably nowhere else, save in Havana at that period, would he have been allowed to command a slaver. He was a scientific navigator, but no sailor; afraid of his shadow, he had not a particle of confidence in his own judgment; everybody was listened to, and he readily yielded his opinion without argument or controversy. Our chief officer, a Catalonian cousin of the captain, made no pretensions to seamanship, yet he was a good mathematician. I still remember the laughs I had at the care he took of his lily-white hands, and the jokes we cracked upon his girl-like manners, voice and conversation. The boatswain, who was in his watch, assured me that he rarely gave an order without humming it out to a tune of some favourite opera.

In this fantastic group, I occupied the position of supernumerary officer and interpreter: but accustomed as I had been to wholesome American seamanship and discipline, I trembled not a little when I discovered the amazing ignorance of the master, and observed the utter worthlessness of our crew.

Forty-one days, however, brought us to the end of our voyage at the mouth of the Rio Pongo. No one being acquainted with the river's entrance or navigation, the captain and four hands went ashore for a pilot, who came off in the afternoon, while our master ascended in a boat to the slave-factory at Bangalang. Four o'clock found us entering the Rio Pongo, with tide and wind in our favour, so that before the sun sank into the Atlantic Ocean we were safe at our anchorage below the settlement.

While we were slowly drifting between the river-banks, and watching the gorgeous vegetation of Africa, which, that evening, first burst upon my sight, I fell into a chat with the native pilot, who had been in the United States, and spoke English remarkably well. Berak very soon inquired whether there was any one else on board who spoke the language besides myself, and when told that the cabin-boy alone knew it, he whispered a story which, in truth, I was not in the least surprised to hear.

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That afternoon one of our crew had attempted the captain's life, while on shore, by snapping a carabine behind his back! Our pilot learned the fact from a native who followed the party from the landing, along the beach; and its truth was confirmed, in his belief, by the significant boasts made by the tallest of the boatmen who accompanied him on board. He was satisfied that the entire gang contemplated our schooner's seizure.

The pilot's story corroborated some hints I received from our cook during the voyage. It struck me instantly, that if a crime like this were really designed, no opportunity for its execution could be more propitious than the present. I determined, therefore, to omit no precaution that might save the vessel and the lives of her honest officers. On examining the carabines brought back from shore, which I had hurriedly thrown into the arm-chest on deck, I found that the lock of this armoury had been forced, and several pistols and cutlasses abstracted.

As night drew on, my judgment, as well as *nervousness*, convinced me that the darkness would not pass without a murderous attempt. There was an unusual silence. On reaching port, there is commonly fun and merriment among crews; but the usual song and invariable guitar were omitted from the evening's entertainment. I searched the deck carefully, yet but two mariners were found above the hatches apparently asleep. Inasmuch as I was only a subordinate officer, I could not command, nor had I any confidence in the nerve or judgment of the chief mate, if I trusted my information to him. Still I deemed it a duty to tell him the story, as well as my discovery about the missing arms. Accordingly, I called the first officer, boatswain, and cook, as quietly as possible, into the cabin, leaving our English cabin-boy to watch in the companion-way. Here I imparted our danger, and asked their assistance in *striking the first blow*. My plan was to secure the crew, and give them battle. The mate, as I expected, shrank like a girl, declining any step till the captain returned. The cook and boatswain, however, silently approved my movement; so that we

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counselled our cowardly comrade to remain below, while we assumed the responsibility and risk of the enterprise.

It may have been rather rash, but I resolved to begin the rescue by shooting down, like a dog and without a word, the notorious Cuban convict who had attempted the captain's life. This, I thought, would strike panic into the mutineers, and end the mutiny in the most bloodless way. Drawing a pair of large horse-pistols from beneath the captain's pillow, and examining the load, I ordered the cook and boatswain to follow me to the deck. But the craven officer would not quit his hold on my person. He besought me not to commit murder. He clung to me with the panting fear and grasp of a woman. He begged me, with every term of endearment, to desist; and, in the midst of my scuffle to throw him off, one of the pistols accidentally exploded. A moment after, my vigilant watch-boy screamed from the starboard, a warning 'look-out!' and, peering forward in the blinding darkness as I emerged from the lighted cabin, I beheld the stalwart ringleader, brandishing a cutlass within a stride of me. I aimed and fired. We both fell: the mutineer with two balls in his abdomen, and I from the recoil of an overcharged pistol.

My face was cut, and my eye injured by the concussion; but as neither combatant was deprived of consciousness, in a moment we were both on our feet. The Spanish felon, however, pressed his hand on his bowels, and rushed forward exclaiming he was slain; but, in his descent to the forecastle, he was stabbed in the shoulder with a bayonet by the boatswain, whose blow drove the weapon with such force that it could hardly be withdrawn from the carcass.

Feeling my face with my hand, I perceived a quantity of blood on my cheek, around which I hastily tied a handkerchief, below my eyes. I then rushed to the arm-chest. At that moment, the crack of a pistol, and a sharp, boyish cry, told me that my pet was wounded beside me. I laid him behind the hatchway, and returned to the charge. By this time I was blind with rage, and fought, it seems, like a *madman*. I confess that I have no personal recollection whatever of the following events,

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and only learned them from the subsequent report of the cook and boatswain.

I stood, they said, over the arm-chest like one spell-bound. My eyes were fixed on the forecastle; and, as head after head loomed out of the darkness above the hatch, I discharged carabine after carabine at the mark. Everything that moved fell by my aim. As I fired the weapons, I flung them away to grasp fresh ones; and, when the battle was over, the cook aroused me from my mad stupor, still groping wildly for arms in the emptied chest.

As the smoke cleared off, the forepart of our schooner seemed utterly deserted; yet we found two men dead, one in mortal agony on the deck, while the ringleader and a colleague were gasping in the forecastle. Six pistols had been fired against us from forward; but, strange to say, the only efficient ball was the one that struck my English boy's leg.

When I came to my senses, my first quest was for the gallant boatswain, who, being unarmed on the forecastle when the unexpected discharge took place, and seeing no chance of escape from my murderous carabines, took refuge over the bows.

Our cabin-boy was soon quieted. The mutineers needed but little care for their hopeless wounds, while the felon chief, like all such wretches, died in an agony of despicable fear, shrieking for pardon. My shriving of his sins was a speedy rite!

Such was my first night in Africa.

## CHAPTER SIX



WHEN the gorgeous sun of Africa shot his first rays through the magnificent trees and herbage that hemmed the placid river, five bodies were cast into the stream, and the traces of the tragedy obliterated as well as possible. The recreant mate, who plunged into the cabin at the report of the first pistol from the forecastle, reappeared with haggard looks and trembling frame, to protest that *he* had no hand in what he called 'the murder.' The cook, boatswain, and African pilot recounted the whole transaction to the master, who inserted it in the log-book, and caused me to sign the narrative with unimplicated witnesses. Then the wound of the cabin-boy was examined and found to be trifling, while mine, though not painful, was thought to imperil my sight. The flint lock of a rebounding pistol had inflicted three gashes, just beneath the eye on my cheek.

There was but little appetite for breakfast that day. After the story was told and recorded, we went sadly to work unmooring the vessel, bringing her slowly like a hearse to an anchorage in front of Bangalang, the residence and factory of Mr. Ormond, better known by the country-name of 'Mongo John.' This personage came on board early in the morning with our returned captain, and promised to send a native doctor to cure both my eye and the boy's leg, making me pledge him a visit as soon as the vessel's duties would permit.

That evening the specie was landed, and the schooner left in my charge by the master, with orders to strip, repair, and provide for the voyage home. Before night, Mongo John fulfilled his promise of a physician, who came on board with his prescription, not in his pocket, but by his side! He ordered my torn cheek to be bathed, every half-hour, *with human milk fresh from the breast*; and in order to secure a prompt, pure, and plentiful supply, a stout negress and her infant were sent, with orders to remain as long as her services might be required! I cannot say whether nature or the remedy healed my wound, but in a short time the flesh cicatrized, and all symptoms of inflammation disappeared entirely.

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It required ten days to put the *Areostatico* in ship-shape and supply her with wood and water. Provisions had been brought from Havana, so that it was only necessary we should stow them in an accessible manner. As our schooner was extremely small, we possessed no slave-deck; accordingly, mats were spread over the fire-wood which filled the interstices of the water casks, in order to make an even surface for our cargo's repose.

When my tiresome task was done, I went ashore – almost for the first time – to report progress to the master; but he was still unprepared to embark his living freight. Large sums, far in advance of the usual market, were offered by him for a cargo of *boys*; still we were delayed full twenty days longer than our contract required before a supply reached Bangalang.

As I had promised Mongo John, or John the Chief, to visit his factory, I took the opportunity to fulfil my pledge. He received me with elaborate politeness; showed me his town, barracoons, and stores, and even his *harem*. The visit paid, he insisted that I should dine with him; and a couple of choice bottles were quickly disposed of. Ormond, like myself, had been a sailor. We spoke of the lands, scenes and adventures each had passed through, while a fresh bottle was called. There is nothing so nourishing to friendship as wine.

While the rosy fluid operated as a sedative on the Mongo, and glued him to his chair in a comfortable nap, it had a contrary effect on my exhilarated nerves. I strolled to the verandah to get a breath of fresh air from the river, but soon dashed off in the darkness to the sacred precincts of the *harem*! I was not detected till I reached nearly the centre of the sanctuary where Ormond confined his motley group of black, mulatto, and quarteroon wives. The first dame who perceived me was a bright mulatto, with rosy cheeks, sloe-like eyes, coquettish turban, and most voluptuous mouth, whom I afterwards discovered to be second in the chief's affections. In an instant the court resounded with a chattering call to her companions, so that, before I could turn, the whole band of gabbling parrots hemmed me in with a deluge of talk.

At last my friends seemed not only anxious to amuse themselves, but to do something for my entertainment also. A

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chatter in a corner settled what it should be. Two or three brought sticks, while two or three brought coals. A fire was quickly kindled in the centre of the court; and as its flames lit up the area, a whirling circle of half-stripped girls danced to the monotonous beat of a *tom-tom*. Presently, the formal ring was broken, and each female danced according to her individual fancy. The claret and champagne in my brain possessed me with the idea that it was my duty to mingle in the bounding throng.

Accordingly, I leaped from the hammock where I had swung idly during the scene, and, beginning with a *balancez* and an *avant-deux*, terminated my exhibition by a regular 'double shuffle' and sailor's hornpipe. The delirious laughter, cracked sides, rollicking fun, and outrageous merriment with which my feats were received, are unimaginable by sober-sided people. Tired of my single exhibition, I seized the prettiest of the group by her slim, shining waist, and whirled her round and round the court in the quickest of waltzes, until, with a kiss, I laid her giddy and panting on the floor. Then, grasping another – another – and another – and treating each to the same dizzy swim, I was about waltzing the whole *seraglio* into quiescence, when who should rise before us but the staring and yawning *Mongol*!

The apparition sobered me. A quarteroon pet of Ormond – just spinning into fashionable and luscious insensibility – fell from my arms into those of her master; and while I apologized for the freak, I charged it altogether to the witchcraft of his wit and wine.

'Hal' said the Mongo, 'it seems you can scent a petticoat as readily as a hound tracks runaways. But there's no harm in *dancing*, Don Téodore; only hereafter I hope you will enjoy the amusement in a less uproarious manner. In Africa we are fond of a siesta after dinner; and I recommend you to get, as soon as possible, under the lee of another bottle.'

We retired once more to his mahogany; and, under the spell of my chieftain's claret and sea-yarns, I was soon lapped in sleep.

Next day the captain of the *Areostatico* drew me aside and hinted that Ormond had taken such a decided fancy for me, and insinuated so warm a wish for my continuance as his clerk

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at Bangalang, that he thought it quite a duty, though a sad one, to give his advice on the subject.

‘It may be well for your purse to stay with so powerful a trader; but beside the improvement of your fortunes, there are doubts whether it will be *wholesome* for you to revisit Havana, at least at present. It may be said that you *commenced* the warfare on board the schooner; and as five men were slain in the affray, it will be necessary for me to report the fact to the *comandante* as soon as I arrive. Now it is true that you saved the vessel, cargo, specie, and my cousin; yet, God knows what may be the result of Havana justice. You will have a rigid examination, and I rather think you will be imprisoned until the final decision is made. When that consummation shall occur is quite uncertain. If you have friends, they will be bled as long as possible before you get out; if you have none, no one will take pains to see you released without recompense. When you see daylight once more, the rest of these ragamuffins and the felon friends of the dead men will dog your steps, and make Havana uncomfortable as well as dangerous; so that I have no hesitation in recommending you to stay where you are, and take the doubloons of the Mongo.’

I was satisfied he only desired to get rid of me in order to reinstate the chief mate in a situation which he could not occupy as long as I was on board. As I meant to stay in Africa, I told him at once that I grieved because he had not spoken his wishes openly, but had masked an ungrateful cowardice by hypocritical solicitude for my welfare. I departed abruptly with a scowl of contempt, called a boat, and throwing my sea chest, bedding, and arms aboard, committed my fate to the African continent.

Mr. Ormond received me very cordially, and, installing me in my new secretaryship, promised a private establishment, a seat at his table, and a negro per month – or its value at the rate of forty dollars – for my services.

When the runners returned from the interior with the slaves required to complete the *Areostatico*’s cargo, I considered it my duty to the Italian grocer of Regla to despatch his vessel personally. Accordingly, I returned on board to aid in stowing one

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hundred and eight boys and girls, the eldest of whom did not exceed fifteen years. As I crawled between decks, I confess I could not imagine how this little army was to be packed or draw breath in a hold but *twenty-two inches high*! Yet the experiment was promptly made, inasmuch as it was necessary to secure them below in descending the river, in order to prevent their leaping overboard and swimming ashore. I found it impossible to adjust the whole in a sitting posture; but we made them lie down in each other's laps, like sardines in a can, and in this way obtained space for the entire cargo. Strange to tell, when the *Areostatico* reached Havana, but three had paid the debt of nature.

As I left the schooner a few miles outside the bar, I crossed her side without an adieu save for the English cabin-boy, whose fate I was pained to entrust to these stupid Spaniards. Indeed, the youth almost belonged to me, for I may say he owed his life to my interference.

Previous to the voyage, while waiting in the harbour of Havana for a crew, our vessel was anchored near the wharves, next to an English merchantman. One afternoon I heard a scream from the neighbouring craft, and perceived a boy rush from the cabin with his face dyed in blood. He was pursued by a burly seaman, inflicting blows with his fist. I implored the brute to desist, but he seized a handspike to knock the stripling down. Upon this I called the child to leap overboard, at the same time commanding a hand to lower my boat and scull in the direction of his fall. The boy obeyed my voice, and in a few minutes I had him on board blessing me for his safety. But the drunken Briton vented his rage in the most indecent language; and had his boat been aboard, I doubt not a summary visit would have terminated in a fight on my deck.

However, as good luck would have it, his skiff was at the landing, so that there was ample time, before he could reach the *Areostatico*, to tie up the bruised face and broken rib of the child, and to conceal him in the house of a Spanish crone in Havana, who cured the maladies of credulous seamen by witchcraft!

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After nightfall the master of the British vessel came aboard to claim his boy; but as he was petulant and seemed disposed to carry matters with a high hand, my temper rose in resistance, and I refused to release the child until he sealed with an oath his promise to treat him better in future. But the cruel scoundrel insisted on unconditional surrender; and to end the controversy, I was compelled to order him off the schooner.

The British consul was invoked to appeal to the captain of the port. In my last interview the boy implored my continued protection and concealment; so that when the Spanish official declared – notwithstanding the officer's conduct – that the vessel was entitled to her crew, and that I must surrender the child, I excused myself by pleading utter ignorance of his whereabouts.

When the British vessel sailed a few days after, I caused the youth to be brought from his concealment; and, with our captain's consent, brought him aboard to serve in our cabin.

I have narrated this little episode in consequence of my love for the boy, and because he was the only English subject I ever knew to ship in a slaver.

I requested the *Areostatico's* owners to pay him liberally for his fidelity when he got back to Havana; and I was happy to learn next year, that they not only complied with my request, but sent him home to his friends in Liverpool.

## CHAPTER SEVEN



WHEN I got back to Bangalang, my first movement was to take possession of the quarters assigned me by the Mongo, and to make myself as comfortable as possible in a land whose chief requirements are shade and shelter. My house, built of cane plastered with mud, consisted of two earthen-floored rooms and a broad verandah. The thatched roof was rather leaky, while my furniture comprised two arm-chests covered with mats, a deal table, a bamboo settle, a tin-pan with palm-oil for a lamp, and a German looking-glass mounted in a paper frame. I augmented these comforts by the addition of a trunk, mattress, hammock and pair of blankets; yet, after all, my household was a sorry affair.

It is time I should make the reader acquainted with the individual who was the presiding genius of the scene, and, in some degree, a type of his peculiar class in Africa.

Ormond was the son of an opulent slave-trader from Liverpool, and owed his birth to the daughter of a native chief on the Rio Pongo. His father seems to have been rather proud of his mulatto stripling, and despatched him to England to be educated. But Master John had made little progress when news of the trader's death was brought to the British agent, who refused the youth further supplies of money. The poor boy soon became an outcast in a land which had not yet become fashionably addicted to philanthropy; and, after drifting about awhile in England, he shipped on board a merchantman. The press-gang soon got possession of the likely mulatto for the service of His Britannic Majesty. Sometimes he played the part of dandy waiter in the cabin; sometimes he swung a hammock with the hands in the forecastle. Thus, five years slipped by, during which the wanderer visited most of the West Indian and Mediterranean stations.

At length the prolonged cruise was terminated, and Ormond paid off. He immediately determined to employ his hoarded cash in a voyage to Africa, where he might claim his father's property. The project was executed; his mother was still alive;

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and, fortunately for the youth, she recognized him at once as her first-born. Accordingly, a 'grand palaver' was appointed, and all Mr. Ormond's brothers, sisters, uncles, and cousins – many of whom were in possession of his father's slaves or their descendants – were summoned to attend. The 'talk' took place at the appointed time. The African mother stood forth staunchly to assert the identity and rights of her first-born, and, in the end, all of the Liverpool trader's property, in houses, lands, and negroes, that could be ascertained, was handed over, according to coast-law, to the returned heir.

When the mulatto youth was thus suddenly elevated into comfort, if not opulence, in his own country, he resolved to augment his wealth by pursuing his father's business. But the whole country was then desolated by a civil war, occasioned, as most of them are, by family disputes, which it was necessary to terminate before trade could be comfortably established.

To this task Ormond steadfastly devoted his first year. His efforts were seconded by the opportune death of one of the warring chiefs. A tame opponent – a brother of Ormond's mother – was quickly brought to terms by a trifling present; so that the sailor boy soon concentrated the family influence, and declared himself 'Mongo,' or, Chief of the River.

Bangalang had long been a noted factory among the English traders. When war was over, Ormond selected this post as his residence, while he sent runners to Sierra Leone and Goree with notice that he would shortly be prepared with ample cargoes. Trade, which had been so long interrupted by hostilities, poured from the interior. Vessels from Goree and Sierra Leone were seen in the offing, responding to his invitation. His stores were packed with British, French, and American fabrics; while hides, wax, palm-oil, ivory, gold, and slaves were the native products for which Spaniards and Portuguese hurried to proffer their doubloons and bills.

It will be readily conjectured that a very few years sufficed to make Jack Ormond not only a wealthy merchant, but a popular Mongo among the great interior tribes of Foulahs and Mandingoes. The petty chiefs, whose territory bordered the sea,

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flattered him with the title of king; and, knowing his *taste*, stocked his *harem* with their choicest children as the most valuable tokens of friendship and fidelity.

When I was summoned to act as secretary or clerk of such a personage, I saw immediately that it would be well not only to understand my duties promptly, but to possess a clear estimate of the property I was to administer and account for. Ormond's easy habits satisfied me that he was not a man of business originally, or had become negligent under the influence of wealth and voluptuousness. My earliest task, therefore, was to make out a *minute inventory* of his possessions, while I kept a watchful eye on his stores, never allowing any one to enter them unattended. When I presented this document, which exhibited a large deficiency, the Mongo received it with indifference, begging me not to 'annoy him with accounts.' His manner indicated so much petulant fretfulness that I augured from it the conscious decline or disorder of his affairs.

As I was returning to the warehouse from this mortifying interview, I encountered an ancient hag – a superintendent of the Mongo's *harem* – who, by signs, intimated that she wanted the key to the 'cloth-chest,' whence she helped herself to several fathoms of calico. The crone could not speak English, and, as I did not understand the Soosoo dialect, we attempted no argument about the propriety of her conduct; but, taking a pencil and paper, and making signs that she should go to the Mongo, who would write an order for the raiment, I led her quietly to the door. The wrath of the virago was instantly kindled, while her horrid face gleamed with that devilish ferocity which in some degree is lost by Africans who dwell on our continent. During the reign of my predecessors, it seems that she had been allowed to control the store keys, and to help herself unstintedly. At dinner, I apprised Mr. Ormond of the negro's conduct; but he received the announcement with the same laugh of indifference that greeted the account of his deficient inventory.

That night I had just stretched myself on my hard pallet, and was revolving the difficulties of my position with some

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degree of pain at my forced continuance in Africa, when my servant tapped softly at the door, and announced that some one demanded admittance, but begged that I would first of all extinguish the light. I was in a country requiring caution; so I felt my pistols before I undid the latch. It was a bright, star-light night; and, as I opened the door sufficiently to obtain a glance beyond – still maintaining my control of the aperture – I perceived the figure of a female, wrapped in cotton cloth from head to foot, except the face, which I recollected as that of the beautiful *quareroon* I was whirling in the waltz when surprised by the Mongo. She put forth her hands from the folds of her garment, and laying one softly on my arm, while she touched her lips with the other, looked wistfully behind, and glided into my apartment.

This poor girl, the child of a mulatto mother and a white parent, was born in the settlement of Sierra Leone, and had acquired our language with much more fluency than is common among her race. It was said that her father had been originally a missionary from Great Britain, but abandoned his profession for the more lucrative traffic in slaves, to which he owed an abundant fortune.

I led my trembling visitor to the arm-chest, and, seating her gently by my side, inquired why I was favoured by so stealthy a visit from the *harem*. My suspicions were aroused; for, though a novice in Africa, I knew enough of the discipline maintained in these slave factories not to allow my fancy to seduce me with the idea that her visit was owing to madcap sentimentality.

The manner of these *quareroon* girls, whose complexion hardly separates them from our own race, is most winningly graceful; and Esther, with abated breath, timidly asked my pardon for intruding, while she declared I had made so bitter an enemy of Unga-golah – the head-woman of the seraglio – that, in spite of danger, she stole to my quarters with a warning. Unga swore revenge. I had insulted and thwarted her; I was able to thwart her at all times, if I remained the Mongo's 'book-man'; I must soon 'go to another country'; but, if I did not, I

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would quickly find the food of Bangalang excessively unwholesome! 'Never eat anything that a Mandingo offers you,' said Esther. 'Take your meals exclusively from the Mongo's table. Unga-golah knows all the Mandingo *ju-jus*, and she will have no scruple in using them in order to secure once more the control of the store keys. Good night!'

With this she rose to depart, begging me to be silent about her visit, and to believe that a poor slave could feel true kindness for a white man, or even expose herself to save him.

The 'wifery' of my employer was a bare enclosure, formed by a quadrangular cluster of mud-houses, the entrance to whose courtyard was never watched save at night. Unga-golah, the eldest and least delectable of the dames, maintained the establishment's police, assigned gifts or servants to each female, and distributed her master's favours according to the bribes she was cajoled by.

In early life and during his gorged prosperity, Ormond – a stout, burly, black-eyed, broad-shouldered, short-necked man – ruled his *harem* with the rigid decorum of the East. But as age and misfortunes stole over the voluptuary, his mental and bodily vigour became impaired, not only by excessive drink, but by the narcotics to which he habitually resorted for excitement. When I became acquainted with him, his face and figure bore the marks of a worn-out *débauché*. His harem now was a fashion of the country rather than a domestic resort. His wives ridiculed him, or amused themselves as they pleased. I learned from Esther that there was hardly one who did not 'flirt' with a lover in Bangalang, and that Unga-golah was blinded by gifts, while the stupor of the Mongo was perpetuated by liquor.

It may be supposed that in such a seraglio, and with such a master, there were but few matrimonial jealousies; still, it is not to be imagined that the Mongo's mansion was free from womanly quarrels. These disputes chiefly occurred when Ormond distributed gifts of calico, beads, tobacco, pipes and looking-glasses. If the slightest preference or inequality was shown, the favourite wife, outraged by her neglected authority,

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became furious; and, for a season, pandemonium was let loose in Bangalang.

One of these scenes of passion occurs to me as I write. I was in the store with the Mongo when an aggrieved dame, not remarkable either for delicacy of complexion or sweetness of odour, entered the room, and marching up with a swagger to her master, dashed a German looking-glass on the floor at his feet. She wanted a larger one, for the glass bestowed on her was half an inch smaller than the gifts to her companions.

When Ormond was sober, his pride commonly restrained him from allowing the women to molest his leisure; so he quietly turned from the virago and ordered her out of the store.

But my lady was not to be appeased by dignity like this. 'Ha!' shrieked the termagant, as she wrenched off her handkerchief. 'Ha!' yelled she, tearing off one sleeve, and then the other. 'Ha!' screamed the fiend, kicking a shoe into one corner, and the other shoe into another corner. 'Ha! Mongo!' roared the beldame, as she stripped every garment from her body and stood absolutely naked before us, slapping her wool, cheeks, forehead, breasts, arms, stomach and limbs, and appealing to Ormond to say where she was deficient in charms, that she should be slighted half an inch on a looking-glass?

Years afterwards, I remember seeing an infuriate Ethiopian fling her infant into the fire because its white father preferred the child of another spouse. Indeed, I was glad my station at Bangalang did not make it needful for the preservation of my respectability that I should indulge in African matrimony.

But these exhibitions of jealous passion were not excited alone by the unequal distribution of presents from the liege lord of Bangalang. I have observed that Ormond's wives took advantage of his carelessness and age, to seek congenial companionship outside the *harem*. Sometimes the preference of two of these sable *belles* alighted on the same lover, and then the battle was transferred from a worthless looking-glass to the darling *beau*. When such a quarrel arose, a meeting between the rivals was arranged out of the Mongo's hearing; when

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throwing off their waist-cloths, the controversy was settled between the female gladiators without much damage. But, now and then, the lovers themselves took up the conflict.

At the appointed time, the duellists appeared, accompanied by friends who were to witness their victory or sympathize in their defeat. Each savage leaped into the arena, armed with a cow-hide cat, whose sharp and triple thongs were capable of inflicting the harshest blows. They stripped, and tossed three *cowries* into the air to determine which of the two should receive the first lashing. The loser immediately took his stand, and received, with the firmness of a martyr, the allotted number of blows. Then came the turn of the whipper, who offered his back to the scourge of the enraged sufferer. Thus they alternated until one gave in, or until the bystanders decreed victory to him who bore the punishment longest without wincing. The flayed backs of these 'chivalrous men of honour' were ever after displayed in token of bravery.

## CHAPTER EIGHT



My business habits and systematic devotion to the Mongo's interests soon made me familiar with the broad features of 'country trade'; but as I was still unable to speak the coast dialects, Mr. Ormond – who rarely entered the warehouse or conversed about commerce – supplied an adroit interpreter, who stood beside me and assisted in the retail of foreign merchandise, for rice, ivory, palm-oil, and domestic provisions. The purchase of slaves and gold was conducted exclusively by the Mongo, who did not consider me sufficiently initiated in native character and tricks to receive so delicate a trust.

Long and dreary were the days and nights of the apparently interminable 'wet season.' Rain in a city, rain in the country, rain in a village, rain at sea, are sufficiently wearying, even to those whose mental activity is amused or occupied by books or the concerns of life; but who can comprehend the insufferable lassitude and despondency that overwhelms an African resident, as he lies on his mat-covered arm-chest, and listens to the endless deluge pouring for days, weeks, months, upon his leaky thatch?

At last, however, the season of rain passed by, and the 'dry season' set in. This was the epoch for the arrival of caravans from the interior; so that we were not surprised when our runners appeared, with news that Ahmah-de-Bellah, son of a noted Fullah chief, was about to visit the Rio Pongo with an imposing train of followers and merchandise. Now, when the coast-traders of the west are apprised that caravans are threading their way towards the Atlantic shores, it is always thought advisable to make suitable preparations for the chiefs, and especially to greet them by messages, before their arrival at the beach. Accordingly, 'barkers' are sent forth on the forest 'paths' to welcome the visitors with gifts of tobacco and powder. 'Barkers' are coloured gentlemen, with fluent tongues and flexible consciences, always in the train of factories on the coast, who hasten to the wilderness at the first signal of a caravan's

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approach, and magnify the prosperity and merchandise of their patrons with as much zeal and veracity as the 'drummers' of more Christian lands.

A few days after our band of travelling agents had departed on their mission, the crack of fire-arms was heard from the hills in our rear, signifying that the Mongo's 'barkers' had been successful with the caravan in tow. A prompt response to the joyous signal was made by our cannons; so that, after half an hour's firing, Ahmah-de-Bellah and his party emerged from the smoke, marshalled by our band of singers, who preceded him, chanting with loud voices the praise of the youthful chieftain. Behind the master came the principal traders and their slaves laden with produce, and followed by forty captive negroes, secured by bamboo withes. These were succeeded by three-score bullocks, a large flock of sheep or goats, and the females of the party; while the procession was closed by the demure tread of a tame and stately ostrich!

Mr. Ormond, when put upon his mettle, was one of the ablest traders in Africa, and received the Mahometan strangers with becoming state. He awaited Ahmah-de-Bellah and his committee of head-traders on the piazza of his receiving-house, which was a rather stately edifice, 150 feet in length, built to be fire-proof for the protection of our stores. When each Fullah stranger was presented, he shook hands and 'snapped fingers' with the Mongo several times; and, as every petty peddler in the train wanted to '*salaam* the white man for good luck,' the process of presentation occupied at least an hour.

According to coast-custom, as soon as these compliments were over, the caravan's merchandise was deposited within our walls, not only for security, but in order that we might gauge the *value of the welcome* the owners were entitled to receive. This precaution, though ungallant, is extremely necessary, inasmuch as many of the interior dealers were in the habit of declaring, on arrival, the value of their gold and ivory to be much greater than it was in fact, in order to receive a more liberal 'present.'

When the goods were stored, a couple of fat bullocks, with

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an abundant supply of rice, were given to the visitors, and the chiefs of the caravan were billeted upon our townspeople. The *canaille* built temporary huts for themselves in the outskirts; while Ahmah-de-Bellah, a strict Mahometan, accompanied by two of his wives, was furnished with a pair of neat houses that had been hastily fitted up with new and elegant mats.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> As it may be interesting to learn the nature of trade on this coast – *which is commonly misunderstood as consisting in slaves alone* – I thought it well to set down the inventory I made out of the caravan's stock and its result, as the various items were entrusted to my guardianship. The body of the caravan itself consisted of 700 persons, principally men; while the produce was as follows:

3500 hides	\$1750
19 large and prime teeth of ivory	1560
Gold	2500
600 pounds small ivory	320
15 tons of rice	600
40 slaves	1600
36 bullocks	360
Sheep, goats, butter, vegetables	100
900 pounds bees-wax	95
Total value of the caravan's merchandise	\$8885

Our profits on this speculation were very flattering, both as regards sales and acquisitions. Rice cost us one cent per pound; hides were delivered at eighteen or twenty cents each; a bullock was sold for twenty or thirty pounds of tobacco; sheep, goats or hogs cost two pounds of tobacco, or a fathom of common cotton, each; ivory was purchased at the rate of a dollar the pound for the best, while inferior kinds were given at half that price. In fact, the profit on our merchandise was, at least, 150 per cent. As gold commands the very best fabrics in exchange, and was paid for at the rate of sixteen dollars an ounce, we made but 70 per cent. on the article. The slaves were delivered at the rate of one hundred 'bars' each. The 'bar' is valued on the coast at half a dollar; but a pound and a half of tobacco is also a 'bar,' as well as a fathom of ordinary cotton cloth, or a pound of powder, while a common musket is equal to twelve 'bars.' Accordingly, where slaves were purchased for 150 pounds of tobacco, only eighteen dollars were, in reality, paid; and when one hundred pounds of powder were given, we got them for twenty dollars each. Our *British* muskets cost us but three dollars a-piece; yet we seldom purchased negroes for this article alone. If the women, offered in the market,

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While the merchandise of these large caravans is unpaid for, their owners, by the custom of the country, remain a costly burden upon the factories. We were naturally anxious to be free from this expense as soon as possible, and gave notice next morning that 'trade would begin forthwith.' Ahmah-de-Bellah, the chief of the caravans, and Mr. Ormond, at once entered into negotiations, so that by nightfall a bargain had been struck, not only for their presents, but for the price of merchandise, and the percentage to be retained as 'native duty.' Such a preliminary liquidation with the *heads* of a caravan is ever indispensable, for without their assistance it would be out of the question to traffic with the ragamuffins who hang on the skirts of opulent chieftains.

Each morning, at daylight, a crier went through the town, announcing the character of the specific trade which would be carried on during hours of business. One day it was in hides; another rice; another cattle. When these were disposed of, a time was specially appointed for the exchange of gold, ivory and slaves; and, at the agreed hour, Mr. Ormond, Ahmah-de-Bellah and myself locked the doors of the warehouse, and traded through a window, while our 'barkers' distributed the goods to the Africans, often using their whips to keep the chattering and disputatious scamps in order. Ahmah-de-Bellah pretended to inspect the measurement of cloth, powder and tobacco, to ensure justice to his compatriots; but, in reality, like a true tax-gatherer, he was busy ascertaining his lawful percentage on the sale, in return for the protection from robbery he gave the petty traders on their pilgrimage to the coast.

At length the market was cleared of sellers and merchandise – except the ostrich, which, when all was over, reached the Mongo's hands as a royal gift from the Ali-mami of Footha-

exceeded twenty-five years of age, we made a deduction of 20 per cent.; but if they were staunchly built, and gave promising tokens for the future, we took them at the price of an able-bodied man. The same estimate was made for youths over four feet four inches high; but children were rarely purchased at the factories, though they might be advantageously traded in the native towns.

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Yallon, the pious father of Ahmah-de-Bellah. The bird, it is true, was presented as a free offering; yet it was hinted that the worthy Ali stood in need of reliable muskets, which his son would take charge of on the journey home. As twenty of those warlike instruments were dispatched by Ahmah-de-Bellah, the ostrich became a costly as well as characteristic gift. Each of the traders, moreover, expected a 'bungee' or 'dash' of some sort, in token of goodwill, and in proportion to his sales; so that we hastened to comply with all the common-law customs of the country, in order to liberate Bangalang from the annoying crowd. They dropped off rapidly as they were paid; and in a short time Ahmah-de-Bellah, his wives, and immediate followers were all that remained of the seven hundred Fullahs.

Ahmah-de-Bellah was tall, graceful, and commanding. As the son of an important chief, he had been free from those menial toils which, in that climate, soon obliterate all intellectual characteristics. His face was well formed for an African's. His high and broad brow arched over a straight nose, while his lips had nothing of that vulgar grossness which gives so sensual an expression to his countrymen. Ahmah's manners to strangers or superiors were refined and courteous in a remarkable degree; but to the mob of the coast and inferiors generally, he manifested that harsh and peremptory tone which is common among the savages of a fiery clime.

Ahmah-de-Bellah was second son of the Ali-mami, or King of Footha-Yallon, who allowed him to exercise the prerogative of leading, for the first time, a caravan to the seaboard, in honour of attaining the discreet age of 'twenty-four rainy seasons.' The privilege, however, was not granted without a view to profit by the courage of his own blood; for the Ali-mami was never known to suffer a son or relative to depart from his jurisdiction without a promise of *half* the products of the lucrative enterprise.

The formation of a caravan, when the king's permission has been finally secured, is a work of time and skill. At the beginning of the 'dry season,' the privileged chieftain departs with

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power of life and death over his followers, and 'squats' in one of the most frequented 'paths' to the sea, while he despatches small bands of daring retainers to other trails throughout the neighbourhood, to blockade every passage to the beach. The siege of the highways is kept up with vigour for a month or more by these black Rob Roys and Robin Hoods, until a sufficient number of traders may be trapped to constitute a valuable caravan, and give importance to its leader. While this is the main purpose of the forest adventure, the occasion is taken advantage of to collect a local tribute, due by small tribes to the Ali, which could not be obtained otherwise. The despotic officer, moreover, avails himself of the blockade to stop malefactors and absconding debtors. Goods that are seized in the possession of the latter may be sequestered to pay his creditors; but if their value is not equal to the debt, the delinquent, if a pagan, is sold as a slave, but is let off with a *bastinado* if he proves to be 'one of the faithful.'

It is natural to suppose that every effort is made by the small traders of the interior to avoid these savage press-gangs. The poor wretches are not only subjected to annoying vassalage by ruffian princes, but the blockade of the forest often diverts them from the point they originally designed to reach – forces them to towns or factories they had no intention of visiting – and, by extreme delay, wastes their provisions and diminishes their frugal profits.

While Ahmah-de-Bellah tarried at Bangalang, it was my habit to visit him every night to hear his interesting chat, as it was translated by an interpreter. Sometimes, in return, I would recount the adventures of my sea-faring life, which seemed to have a peculiar flavour for this child of the wilderness, who now gazed for the first time on the ocean. Among other things, I strove to convince him of the world's rotundity; but, to the last, he smiled incredulously at my daring assertion, and closed the argument by asking me to prove it from the Koran? He allowed me the honours due a traveller and 'book-man'; but a mind that had digested and remembered every text of Mahomet's volume

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was not to be deceived by such idle fantasies. He undertook to conquer my ignorance of his creed by a careful exposition of its mysteries, and I was so patient a listener that I believe Ahmah was entirely satisfied of my conversion.

My seeming acquiescence was well repaid by the Fullah's confidence. He returned my nightly calls with interest; and, visiting me in the warehouse during hours of business, became so fervently wrapped up in my spiritual salvation that he would spout Mahometanism for hours through an interpreter. To get rid of him one day, I promised to follow the Prophet with pleasure if he consented to receive me; but I insisted on entering the 'fold of the faithful' *without* submitting to the peculiar rite of Mussulman baptism!

Ahmah-de-Bellah took the jest kindly, laughing like a good fellow, and from that day forward, we were sworn cronies. The Fullah at once wrote down a favourite prayer in Arabic, requiring, as my spiritual guide, that I should commit it to memory for constant and ready use. After a day or two, he examined me in the ritual; but, finding I was at fault after the first sentence, reproached me pathetically upon my negligence and exhorted me to repentance, much to the edification of our interpreter, who was neither Jew, Christian, nor Mussulman.

But the visit of the young chieftain, which began in trade and tapered off in piety, drew to a close. Ahmah-de-Bellah began to prepare for his journey homeward. As the day of departure approached, I saw that my joke had been taken seriously by the Fullah, and that he *relied* upon my apostasy. At the last moment, Ahmah tried to put me to a severe test, by suddenly producing the holy book, and requiring me to seal our friendship by an oath that I would never abandon Islamism. I contrived, however, adroitly to evade the affirmation by feigning an excessive anxiety to acquire more profound knowledge of the Koran, before I made so solemn a pledge.

It came to pass that, out of the forty slaves brought in the caravan, the Mongo rejected eight. After some altercation, Ahmah-de-Bellah consented to discard seven; but he insisted

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that the remaining veteran should be shipped, as he could neither *kill* nor send him back to Footha-Yallon.

I was somewhat curious to know the crime this culprit had committed, which was so heinous as to demand his perpetual exile, though it spared his life. The chief informed me that the wretch had slain his son; and, as there was no punishment for such an offence assigned by the Koran, the judges of his country condemned him to be sold a slave to Christians, — a penalty they considered worse than death.

Another curious feature of African law was developed in the sale of this caravan. I noticed a couple of women drawn along with ropes around their necks, while others of their sex and class were suffered to wander about without bonds. These females, the chief apprised us, would have been burnt in his father's domains for witchcraft, had not his venerable ancestor been so much distressed for powder that he thought their lives would be more valuable to his treasury than their carcasses to outraged law.

It was a general complaint among the companions of Ahmah-de-Bellah that the caravan was scant of slaves in consequence of this unfortunate lack of powder. The young chieftain promised better things in future. Next year, the Mongo's barracoons should teem with his conquests. When the 'rainy season' approached, his father meant to carry on a 'great war' against a variety of small tribes, whose captives would replenish the herds that, two years before, had been carried off by a sudden blight.

I learned from my intelligent Fullah, that while the Mahometan courts of his country rescued by law the people of their own faith from slavery, they omitted no occasion to inflict it, as a penalty, upon the African 'unbelievers' who fell within their jurisdiction. Among these unfortunates, the smallest crime is considered capital, and a 'capital crime' merits the profitable punishment of slavery. Nor was it difficult, he told me, for a country of 'true believers' to acquire a multitude of bondsmen. They detested the institution, it is true, among themselves, and among their own caste, but it was both right and reputable

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among the unorthodox. The Koran commanded the 'subjugation of the tribes to the true faith,' so that, to enforce the Prophet's order against infidels, they resorted to the white man's cupidity, which authorized its votaries to enslave the negro! My inquisitiveness prompted me to demand whether these holy wars spoken of in the Koran were not somewhat stimulated, in our time, at least, by the profits that ensued; and I even ventured to hint that it was questionable whether the mighty chief of Footha-Yallon would willingly storm a Kaffir fortification, were he not prompted by the booty of slaves!

Ahmah-de-Bellah was silent for a minute, when his solemn face gradually relaxed into a quizzical smile, as he replied that, in truth, Mahometans were no worse than Christians, so that it was quite likely – if the white elect of heaven, who knew how to make powder and guns, did not tempt the black man with their weapons – the commands of Allah would be followed with less zeal, and implements not quite so dangerous!

I could not help thinking that there was a good deal of quiet satire in the gossip of this negro prince. According to the custom of his country, we 'exchanged names' at parting; and, while he put in my pocket the gift of a well-thumbed Koran, I slung over his shoulder a double-barrelled gun. We walked side by side for some miles into the forest, as he went forth from Bangalang; and as we 'cracked fingers' for farewell, I promised with my hand on my heart, that the 'next dry season' I would visit his father in his realm of Footha-Yallon.

## CHAPTER NINE

I WAS a close watcher of Mongo John whenever he engaged in the purchase of slaves. As each negro was brought before him, Ormond examined the subject, without regard to sex, from head to foot. A careful manipulation of the chief muscles, joints, arm-pits and groins was made, to assure soundness. The mouth, too, was inspected, and if a tooth was missing, it was noted as a defect liable to deduction. Eyes, voice, lungs, fingers and toes were not forgotten; so that when the negro passed from the Mongo's hands without censure, he might have been readily adopted as a good 'life' by an insurance company.

Upon one occasion, to my great astonishment, I saw a stout and apparently powerful man discarded by Ormond as utterly worthless. His full muscles and sleek skin, to my unpractised eye, denoted the height of robust health. Still, I was told that he had been medicated for the market with bloating drugs, and sweated with powder and lemon-juice to impart a gloss to his skin. Ormond remarked that these jockey-tricks are as common in Africa as among horse-dealers in Christian lands; and desiring me to feel the negro's pulse, I immediately detected disease or excessive excitement. In a few days I found the poor wretch, abandoned by his owner, a paralyzed wreck in the hut of a villager at Bangalang.

When a slave becomes useless to his master in the interior, or exhibits signs of failing constitution, he is soon disposed of to a peddler or broker. These men call to their aid a quack, familiar with drugs, who, for a small compensation, undertakes to refit an impaired body for the temptation of greenhorns. Sometimes the cheat is successfully effected; but experienced slavers detect it readily by the yellow eye, swollen tongue, and feverish skin.

After a few more lessons, I was considered by the Mongo sufficiently learned in the slave traffic to be entrusted with the sole management of his stores. This exemption from commerce enabled him to indulge more than ever in the use of ardent

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spirits, though his vanity to be called 'king' still prompted him to attend faithfully to all the 'country-palavers'; and, let it be said to his credit, his decisions were never defective in judgment or impartiality.

After I had been three months occupied in the multifarious intercourse of Bangalang and its neighbourhood, I understood the language well enough to dispense with the interpreter, who was one of the Mongo's confidential agents. When my companion departed on a long journey, he counselled me to make up with Unga-golah, as she suspected my intimacy with Esther, who would doubtless be denounced to Ormond, unless I purchased the beldame's silence.

Indeed, ever since the night of warning, when the beautiful *quartern* visited my hovel, I had contrived to meet this charming girl, as the only solace of my solitude. Amid all the wild, passionate, and savage surroundings of Bangalang, Esther was the only link that still seemed to bind me to humanity and the lands beyond the seas. On that burning coast, I was not excited by the stirring of an adventurous life, nor was my young heart seduced and bewildered by absorbing avarice. Many a night, when the dews penetrated my flesh, as I looked towards the west, my soul shrank from the selfish wretches around me, and went off in dreams to the homes I had abandoned. When I came back to myself – when I was forced to recognize my doom in Africa – when I acknowledged that my lot had been cast, perhaps unwisely, by myself, my spirit turned, like the worm from the crushing heel, and found nothing that kindled for me with the light of human sympathy, save this outcast girl. Esther was to me as a sister, and when the hint of her harm or loss was given, I hastened to disarm the only hand that could inflict a blow. Unga-golah was a woman, and a rope of sparkling coral for her neck smothered all her wrongs.

The months I had passed in Africa without illness – though I went abroad after dark, and bathed in the river during the heat of the day – made me believe myself proof against malaria. But, at length, a violent pain in my loins, accompanied by a swimming head, warned me that the African fever held me in

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its dreaded grip. In two days I was delirious. Ormond visited me; but I knew him not, and in my madness, called on Esther, accompanying the name with terms of endearment. This, I was told, stirred the surprise and jealousy of the Mongo, who forthwith assailed the matron of his harem with a torrent of inquiries and abuse. But Unga-golah was faithful. The beads had sealed her tongue; so that, with the instinctive adroitness peculiar to ladies of her colour, she fabricated a story which not only quieted the Mongo, but added lustre to Esther's character.

The credulous old man finding Unga so well disposed towards his watchful clerk, restored the warehouse to her custody. This was the height of her avaricious ambition; and, in token of gratitude for my profitable malady, she contrived to let Esther become the nurse and guardian of my sick-bed.

As my fever and delirium continued, a native doctor, renowned for his skill, was summoned, who ordered me to be cupped in the African fashion by scarifying my back and stomach with a hot knife, and applying plaintain leaves to the wounds. The operation allayed my pulse for a few hours; but as the fever came back with new vigour, it became necessary for my attendants to arouse the Mongo to a sense of my imminent danger. Yet Ormond, instead of springing with alacrity to succour a friend and retainer in affliction, sent for a young man, named Edward Joseph, who had formerly been in his employment, but was now settled on his own account in Bangalang.

Joseph proved a good Samaritan. As soon as he dared venture upon my removal, he took me to his establishment at Kambia, and engaged the services of another Mandingo doctor, in whose absurdities he believed. But all the charms and incantations of the savage would not avail, and I remained in a state of utter prostration and apparent insensibility until morning. As soon as day dawned, my faithful Esther was again on the field of action; and this time she insisted upon the trial of her judgment, in the person of an old white-headed woman, who accompanied her in the guise of the greatest enchantress of the coast. A

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slave, paid in advance, was the fee for which she undertook to warrant my cure.

No time was to be lost. The floor of a small and close mud hut was intensely heated, and thickly strewn with moistened lemon leaves, over which a cloth was spread for a couch. As soon as the bed was ready, I was borne to the hovel, and, covered with blankets, was allowed to steam and perspire, while my medical attendant dosed me with half a tumbler of a green disgusting juice which she extracted from herbs. This process of drinking and barbecuing was repeated during five consecutive days, at the end of which my fever was gone. But my convalescence was not speedy. For many a day, I stalked about, a useless skeleton, quivering with ague, and afflicted by an insatiable appetite, until a French physician restored me to health by the use of cold baths at the crisis of my fever.

When I was sufficiently recovered to attend to business, Mongo John desired me to resume my position in his employment. I heard, however, from Esther, that during my illness, Unga-golah used her opportunities so profitably in the warehouse that there would be sad deficiencies, which, doubtless, might be thrown on me, if the crone were badly disposed at any future period. Accordingly, I thought it decidedly most prudent to decline the clerkship, and requested the Mongo to recompense me for the time and attention I had already bestowed on him. This was refused by the indolent voluptuary; so we parted with coolness, and I was once more adrift in the world.

In these great outlying colonies and lodgments of European nations in the East Indies and Africa, a stranger is commonly welcome to the hospitality of every foreigner. I had no hesitation, therefore, in returning to the house of Joseph, who, like myself, had been a clerk of Ormond, and suffered from the pilferings of the matron.

My host, I understood, was a native of London, where he was born of continental parents, and came to Sierra Leone with Governor Turner. Upon the death or return of that officer—I do not recollect which—the young adventurer

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remained in the colony, and, for a time, enjoyed the post of harbour master. His first visit to the Rio Pongo was in the capacity of supercargo of a small coasting craft, laden with valuable merchandise. Joseph succeeded in disposing of his wares, but was not equally fortunate in collecting their avails. It was, perhaps, an ill-judged act of the supercargo, but he declined to face his creditors with a deficient balance-sheet; and quitting Sierra Leone for ever, accepted service with Ormond. For a year he continued in this employment; but, at the end of that period, considering himself sufficiently informed of the trade and language of the river, he sent a message to his creditors at the British settlement that he could promptly pay them in full, if they would advance him capital enough to commence an independent trade. The terms were accepted by an opulent Israelite, and in a short time Edward Joseph was numbered among the successful factors of Rio Pongo.

## CHAPTER TEN

THE 15th of March 1827 was an epoch in my life. I remember it well, because it became the turning-point of my destiny. A few weeks more of indolence might have forced me back to Europe or America, but the fortune of that day decided my residence and dealings in Africa.

At dawn of the 15th, a vessel was descried in the offing, and, as she approached the coast, she initiated soon ascertained her to be a Spanish slaver. But, what was the amazement of the river grandees when the captain landed and consigned his vessel to me.

'*La Fortuna*,' the property, chiefly, of my old friend the Regla grocer, was successor of the *Areostatico*, which she exceeded in size as well as comfort. Her captain was charged to pay me my wages in full for the round voyage in the craft I had abandoned, and handed me, besides, a purse of thirty doubloons as a testimonial from his owners for my defence of their property on the dreadful night of our arrival. The *Fortuna* was despatched to me for an 'assorted cargo of slaves,' while 200,000 cigars and 500 ounces of Mexican gold were on board for their purchase. My commission was fixed at ten per cent., and I was promised a command whenever I saw fit to abandon my residence on the African coast.

Having no factory, or *barracoon* of slaves, and being elevated to the dignity of 'a trader' in so sudden a manner, I thought it best to summon all the factors of the river on board the schooner, with an offer to divide the cargo, provided they would pledge the production of the slaves within thirty days. Despatch was all-important to the owners, and so anxious was I to gratify them, that I consented to pay fifty dollars for every slave that should be accepted.

After some discussion my offer was taken, and the cargo apportioned among the residents. They declined, however, receiving any share of the cigars in payment, insisting on liquidation in gold alone.

As this was my first enterprise, I felt at a loss to know how

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to convert my useless tobacco into merchantable doubloons. In this strait, I had recourse to the Englishman Joseph, who hitherto traded exclusively in produce; but, being unable to withstand the temptation of gold, had consented to furnish a portion of my required negroes. As soon as I stated the difficulty, he proposed to send the havanas to his Hebrew friend in Sierra Leone, where, he did not doubt, they would be readily exchanged for Manchester merchandise. That evening a canoe was despatched to the English colony with the cigars; and, on the tenth day after, the trusty Israelite appeared in the Rio Pongo, with a cutter laden to the deck with superior British fabrics. The rumour of five hundred doubloons disturbed his rest in Sierra Leone! So much gold could not linger in the hands of natives as long as Manchester and Birmingham were represented in the colony; and, accordingly, he coasted the edge of the surf, as rapidly as possible, to pay me a profit of four dollars a thousand for the cigars, and to take his chances at the exchange of my gold for the sable cargo! By this happy hit I was enabled to pay for the required balance of negroes, as well as to liquidate the schooner's expenses while in the river. I was amazingly rejoiced and proud at this happy result, because I learned from the captain that the invoice of cigars was a malicious trick, palmed off on the *Areostatico's* owners by her captain, in order to thwart or embarrass me, when he heard I was to be entrusted with the purchase of a cargo on the coast.

At the appointed day, *La Fortuna* sailed with 220 human beings packed in her hold. Three months afterwards, I received advices that she safely landed 217 in the bay of Matanzas, and that their sale yielded a clear profit on the voyage of forty-one thousand four hundred and thirty-eight dollars.

As I am now fairly embarked in a trade which absorbed so many of my most vigorous years, I suppose the reader will not be loth to learn a little of my experience in the alleged 'cruelties' of this commerce; and the first question, in all likelihood, that rises to his lips is a solicitation to be apprised of the embarkation and treatment of slaves on the dreaded voyage.

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An African factor of fair repute is ever careful to select his human cargo with consummate prudence, so as not only to supply his employers with athletic labourers, but to avoid any taint of disease that may affect the slaves in their transit to Cuba or the American main. Two days before embarkation, the head of every male and female is neatly shaved; and if the cargo belongs to several owners, each man's brand is impressed on the body of his respective negro. This operation is performed with pieces of silver wire, or small irons fashioned into the merchant's initials, heated just hot enough to blister without burning the skin. When the entire cargo is the venture of but one proprietor, the branding is always dispensed with.

On the appointed day, the *barracoon* or slave-pen is made joyous by the abundant 'feed' which signalizes the negro's last hours in his native country. The feast over, they are taken alongside the vessel in canoes; and as they touch the deck, they are entirely stripped, so that women as well as men go out of Africa as they came into it — *naked*. This precaution, it will be understood, is indispensable; for perfect nudity, during the whole voyage, is the only means of securing cleanliness and health. In this state, they are immediately ordered below, the men to the hold and the women to the cabin, while boys and girls are, day and night, kept on deck, where their sole protection from the elements is a sail in fair weather, and a tarpaulin in foul.

At meal time they are distributed in messes of ten. Thirty years ago, when the Spanish slave-trade was lawful, the captains were somewhat more ceremoniously religious than at present, and it was then a universal habit to make the gangs say grace before meat, and give thanks afterwards. In our days, however, they dispense with this ritual, and content themselves with a '*Viva la Habana*,' or 'hurrah for Havana,' accompanied by a clapping of hands.

This over, a bucket of salt water is served to each mess, by way of 'finger glasses' for the ablution of hands, after which a *kidd*, either of rice, farina, yams, or beans, according to the

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tribal habit of the negroes, is placed before the squad. In order to prevent greediness or inequality in the appropriation of nourishment, the process is performed by signals from a monitor, whose motions indicate when the darkies shall dip and when they shall swallow.

It is the duty of a guard to report immediately whenever a slave refuses to eat, in order that his abstinence may be traced to stubbornness or disease. Negroes have sometimes been found in slavers who attempted voluntary starvation; so that, when the watch reports the patient to be 'shamming,' his appetite is stimulated by the medical antidote of a 'cat.' If the slave, however, is truly ill, he is forthwith ticketed for the sick-list by a bead or button around his neck, and despatched to an infirmary in the forecabin.

These meals occur twice daily – at ten in the morning and four in the afternoon – and are terminated by another ablution. Thrice in each twenty-four hours they are served with half a pint of water. Pipes and tobacco are circulated economically among both sexes; but as each negro cannot be allowed the luxury of a separate bowl, boys are sent round with an adequate supply, allowing a few whiffs to each individual. On regular days – probably three times a week – their mouths are carefully rinsed with vinegar, while, nearly every morning, a dram is given as an antidote to scurvy.

Although it is found necessary to keep the sexes apart, they are allowed to converse freely during day while on deck. Corporal punishment is never inflicted save by order of an officer, and, even then, not until the culprit understands exactly why it is done. Once a week, the ship's barber scrapes their chins without assistance from soap; and, on the same day, their nails are closely pared, to ensure security from harm in those nightly battles that occur, when the slave contests with his neighbour every inch of plank to which he is glued. During afternoons of serene weather, men, women, girls, and boys are allowed to unite in African melodies, which they always enhance by an extemporaneous *tom-tom* on the bottom of a tub or tin kettle.

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In every well-conducted slaver, the captain, officers, and crew are alert and vigilant to preserve the cargo. It is their personal interest, as well as the interest of humanity, to do so. The boatswain is incessant in his patrol of purification, and disinfecting substances are plentifully distributed. The upper deck is washed and swabbed daily; the slave deck is scraped and holy-stoned; and, at nine o'clock each morning, the captain inspects every part of his craft; so that no vessel, except a man-of-war, can compare with a slaver in systematic order, purity, and neatness. I am not aware that the ship-fever, which sometimes decimates the emigrants from Europe, has ever prevailed in these African traders.

At sundown, the process of stowing the slaves for the night is begun. The second mate and boatswain descend into the hold, whip in hand, and range the slaves in their regular places; those on the right side of the vessel facing forward, and lying in each other's lap, while those on the left are similarly stowed with their faces towards the stern. In this way each negro lies on his right side, which is considered preferable for the action of the heart. In allotting places, particular attention is paid to size, the taller being selected for the greatest breadth of the vessel, while the shorter and younger are lodged near the bows. When the cargo is large and the lower deck crammed, the supernumeraries are disposed of on deck, which is securely covered with boards to shield them from moisture. The *strict* discipline of nightly stowage is, of course, of the greatest importance in slavers, else every negro would accommodate himself as if he were a passenger.

In order to ensure perfect silence and regularity during night, a slave is chosen as constable from every ten, and furnished with a 'cat' to enforce commands during his appointed watch. In remuneration for his services, which, it may be believed, are admirably performed whenever the whip is required, he is adorned with an old shirt or tarry trousers. Now and then, billets of wood are distributed among the sleepers, but this luxury is never granted until the good temper of the negroes is ascertained, for slaves have often been tempted to mutiny

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by the power of arming themselves with these pillows from the forest.

Many of my readers will consider it barbarous to make slaves lie down naked upon a board, but native Africans are not familiar with the use of feather-beds, nor do any but the free and rich in their mother country indulge in the luxury even of a mat or raw-hide. Among the Mandingo chiefs – the most industrious and civilized of Africans – the beds, divans, and sofas are heaps of mud, covered with untanned skins for cushions, while logs of wood serve for bolsters! I am of opinion, therefore, that emigrant slaves experience very slight inconvenience in lying down on the deck.

*Ventilation* is carefully attended to. The hatches and bulk-heads of every slaver are grated, and apertures are cut about the deck for ampler circulation of air. Wind-sails, too, are constantly pouring a steady draft into the hold, except during a chase, when, of course, every comfort is temporarily sacrificed for safety. During calms or in light and baffling winds, when the suffocating air of the tropics makes ventilation impossible, the gratings are always removed, and portions of the slaves allowed to repose at night on deck, while the crew is armed to watch the sleepers.

Handcuffs are rarely used on shipboard. It is the common custom to secure slaves in the *barracoons*, and while shipping, by chaining *ten* in a gang; but as these platoons would be extremely inconvenient at sea, the manacles are immediately taken off and replaced by leg-irons, which fasten them in pairs by the feet. Shackles are never used but for full-grown men, while women and boys are set at liberty as soon as they embark. It frequently happens that when the behaviour of male slaves warrants their freedom, they are released from all fastenings long before they arrive. Irons are altogether dispensed with on many Brazilian slavers, as negroes from Anjuda, Benin, and Angola are mild; and unadicted to revolt like those who dwell east of the Cape or north of the Gold Coast. Indeed, a knowing trader will never use chains but when compelled, for the longer a slave is ironed the more he deteriorates; and as his sole object

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is to land a healthy cargo, pecuniary interest, as well as natural feeling, urges the sparing of metal.

My object in writing this palliative description is not to exculpate the slavers or their commerce, but to correct those exaggerated stories which have so long been current in regard to the *usual* voyage of a trader.

In old times, before treaties made slave-trade piracy, the landing of human cargoes was as comfortably conducted as the disembarkation of flour. But now, the enterprise is effected with secrecy and hazard. A wild, uninhabited portion of the coast, where some little bay or sheltering nook exists, is commonly selected by the captain and his confederates. As soon as the vessel is driven close to the beach and anchored, her boats are packed with slaves, while the craft is quickly dismantled to avoid detection from sea or land. The busy skiffs are hurried to and fro incessantly till the cargo is entirely ashore, when the secured gang, led by the captain, and escorted by armed sailors, is rapidly marched to the nearest plantation. There it is safe from the rapacity of local magistrates, who, if they have a chance, imitate their superiors by exacting 'gratifications.'

In the meantime a *courier* has been despatched to the owners in Havana, Matanzas, or Santiago de Cuba, who immediately post to the plantation with clothes for the slaves and gold for the crew. Preparations are quickly made through brokers for the sale of the blacks; while the vessel, if small, is disguised, to warrant her return under the coasting flag to a port of clearance. If the craft happens to be large, it is considered perilous to attempt a return with a cargo, or 'in distress,' and, accordingly, she is either sunk or burnt where she lies.

When the genuine African reaches a plantation for the first time, he fancies himself in paradise. He is amazed by the generosity with which he is fed with fruit and fresh provisions. His new clothes, red cap, and roasting blanket (a civilized superfluity he never dreamed of) strike him dumb with delight, and, in his savage joy, he not only forgets country, relations, and friends, but skips about like a monkey, while he dons his garments wrong side out or hind-part before! The arrival of a

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carriage or cart creates no little confusion among the Ethiopian groups, who never imagined that beasts could be made to work. But the climax of wonder is reached when that paragon of oddities, a Cuban postilion, dressed in his sky-blue coat, silver-laced hat, white breeches, polished jack-boots, and ringing spurs, leaps from his prancing quadruped, and bids them welcome in their mother tongue. Every African rushes to 'snap fingers' with his equestrian brother, who, according to orders, forthwith preaches an edifying sermon on the happiness of being a white man's slave, taking care to jingle his spurs and crack his whip at the end of every sentence, by way of *amen*.

Whenever a cargo is owned by several proprietors, each one takes his share at once to his plantation; but if it is the property of speculators, the blacks are sold to any one who requires them before removal from the original depot. The sale is, of course, conducted as rapidly as possible, to forestall the interference of British officials with the Captain-General.

Many of the Spanish governors in Cuba have respected treaties, or, at least, promised to enforce the laws. Squadrons of dragoons and troops of lancers have been paraded with convenient delay, and ordered to gallop to plantations designated by the representative of England. It generally happens, however, that when the hunters arrive the game is gone. Scandal declares that, while brokers are selling the blacks at the depot, it is not unusual for their owner or his agent to be found knocking at the door of the Captain-General's secretary. It is even said that the Captain-General himself is sometimes present in the sanctuary, and after a chat about the happy landing of 'the contraband,' the requisite *rouleaux* are insinuated into the official desk under the smoke of a *cigarillo*. The metal is always considered the property of the Captain-General, but his scribe avails himself of a lingering farewell at the door, to hint an immediate need for 'a very small darkey!' Next day, the diminutive African does not appear; but his equivalent is unquestionably furnished.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE prompt despatch I gave the schooner *Fortuna* started new ideas among the traders of the Rio Pongo, so that it was generally agreed my method of dividing the cargo among different factors was not only most advantageous for speed, but prevented monopoly, and gave all an equal chance. At a 'grand palaver' or assemblage of the traders on the river, it was resolved that this should be the course of trade for the future. All the factors, except Ormond, attended and assented; but we learned that the Mongo's people, with difficulty, prevented him from sending an armed party to break up our deliberations.

The knowledge of this hostile feeling soon spread throughout the settlement and adjacent towns, creating considerable excitement against Ormond. My plan and principles were approved by the natives as well as foreigners, so that warning was sent the Mongo, if any harm befell Joseph and Theodore, it would be promptly resented. Our native landlord, a Foulah by descent, told him boldly, in presence of his people, that the Africans were 'tired of a mulatto Mongo'; and from that day his power dwindled away visibly, though a show of respect was kept up in consequence of his age and ancient importance.

During these troubles, the *Areostatico* returned to my consignment, and in twenty-two days was despatched with a choice cargo of Mandingos, a tribe which had become fashionable for house servants among the Havanese. But the vessel was never heard of, and it is likely she went down in the dreadful gales that scourged the coast immediately after her departure.

I had now grown to such sudden importance among the natives that the neighbouring chiefs and kings sent me daily messages of friendship, with trifling gifts that I readily accepted. One of these bordering lords, more generous and insinuating than the rest, hinted several times his anxiety for a closer connection in affection as well as trade, and, at length, insisted upon becoming my father-in-law!

I had always heard in Italy that it was something to receive the hand of a princess, even after long and tedious wooing; but

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now that I was surrounded by a mob of kings, who absolutely thrust their daughters on me, I confess I had the bad taste not to leap with joy at the royal offering. Still, I was in a difficult position, as no graver offence can be given a chief than to reject his child. It is so serious an insult to refuse a wife, that high-born natives, in order to avoid quarrels or war, accept the tender boon, and as soon as etiquette permits, pass it over to a friend or relation. As the offer was made to me personally by the king, I found the utmost difficulty in escaping. Indeed, he would receive no excuse. When I declined on account of the damsel's youth, he laughed incredulously. If I urged the feebleness of my health and tardy convalescence, he insisted that a regular life of matrimony was the best cordial for an impaired constitution. In fact, I was on the point of yielding myself, a patient sacrifice, when Joseph came to my relief with the offer of his hand as a substitute.

Prince Yungie in reality did not care so much who should be his son-in-law as that he obtained one with a white skin and plentiful purse. Joseph or Theodore, Saxon or Italian, made no difference to the chief; and as is the case in all Oriental lands, the opinion of the lady was of no importance whatever.

I cannot say that my partner viewed this project with the disgust that I did. Perhaps he was a man of more liberal philosophy and wider views of human brotherhood; at any rate, his residence in Africa gave him a taste not only for its people, habits, and superstitions, but he upheld practical amalgamation with more fervour and honesty than a regular abolitionist. He admired the women, the men, the language, the cookery, the music. He would fall into ecstasies over the discord of a bamboo *tom-tom*. I have reason to believe that even African barbarities had charms for the odd Englishman; but he was chiefly won by the *dolce far niente* of the natives, and the Oriental licence of polygamy. In a word, Joseph had the same taste for a full-blooded *cuffee* that an epicure has for the *haut goût* of a stale partridge, and was in ecstasies at my extrication. He neglected his siestas and his accounts; he wandered from house to house with the rapture of an

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impatient bridegroom; and, till everything was ready for the nuptial rites, no one at the factory had a moment's rest.

As the bride's relations were eminent folks on the upper part of the river, they insisted that the marriage ceremony should be performed with all the formalities due to the lady's rank. Esther, my mentor in every 'country-question,' suggested that it would be contrary to the Englishman's interest to ally himself with a family whose only motive was sordid. She strongly urged that if he persisted in taking the girl, he should do so without a '*colungee*,' or ceremonial feast. But Joseph was obstinate as a bull; and as he doubted whether he would ever commit matrimony again, he insisted that the nuptials should be celebrated with all the fashionable splendour of high life in Africa.

When this was decided, it became necessary, by a fiction of etiquette, to ignore the previous offer of the bride, and to begin anew, as if the damsel were to be sought in the most delicate way by a desponding lover. She must be demanded formally, by the bridegroom from her reluctant mother; and accordingly, the most respectable matron in our colony was chosen by Joseph from his coloured acquaintances to be the bearer of his valentine. The selected was the principal wife of our native landlord, Ali-Ninpha; and as Africans as well as Turks love by the pound, the dame happened to be one of the fattest, as well as most respectable, in our parish. Several female *attachés* were added to the suite of the ambassador, who forthwith departed to make a proper '*dantica*.' The gifts selected were of four kinds. First of all, two demijohns of *trade* rum were filled to gladden the community of Mongo-Yungee's town. Next, a piece of blue cotton cloth, a musket, a keg of powder, and a demijohn of *pure* rum were packed for papa. Thirdly, a youthful virgin dressed in a white '*tontongee*,'<sup>1</sup> a piece of white cotton cloth, a white basin, a white sheep,

<sup>1</sup> A *tontongee* is a strip of white cotton cloth, three inches wide and four feet long, used as a virgin African's only dress. It is wound round the limbs, and, hanging partly in front and partly behind, is supported from the maiden's waist by strands of *showee-beads*.

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and a basket of white rice were put up for mamma, in token of her daughter's purity. And lastly, a German looking-glass, several bunches of beads, a coral necklace, a dozen of turkey-red handkerchiefs, and a spotless white country-cloth were presented to the bride; together with a decanter of white palm oil for the anointment of her ebony limbs after the bath, which is never neglected by African *belles*.

While the missionary of love was absent, our sighing swain devoted his energies to the erection of a bridal palace; and the task required just as many days as were employed in the creation of the world. The building was finished by the aid of bamboos, straw, and a modicum of mud; and as Joseph imagined that love and coolness were secured in such a climate by utter darkness, he provided an abundance of that commodity by omitting windows entirely. The furnishing of the domicile was completed with all the luxury of native taste. An elastic four-poster was constructed of bamboos; some dashing crockery was set about the apartment for display; a cotton quilt was cast over the matted couch; an old trunk served for bureau and wardrobe; and as negressès adore looking-glasses, the largest in our warehouse was nailed against the door, as the only illuminated part of the edifice.

At last all was complete, and Joseph snapped his fingers with delight, when the corpulent dame waddled up asthmatically, and announced with a wheeze that her mission was prosperous. If there had ever been doubt, there was now no more. The oracular '*feitich*' had announced that the delivery of the bride to her lord might take place 'on the tenth day of the new moon.'

As the planet waxed from its slender sickle to the thicker quarter, the impatience of my Cockney waxed with it; but at length the firing of muskets, the twang of horns, and the rattle of tom-toms gave notice from the river that Coomba, the bride, was approaching the quay. Joseph and myself hastily donned our clean shirts, white trousers, and glistening pumps; and, under the shade of broad *sombreros* and umbrellas, proceeded to greet the damsel. Our fat friend, the matron; her husband; our servants and a troop of village ragamuffins

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accompanied us to the water's brink, so that we were just in time to receive the five large canoes bearing the escort of the king and his daughter. Boat after boat disgorged its passengers; but, to our dismay, they ranged themselves apart, and were evidently displeased. When the last canoe, decorated with flags, containing the bridal party, approached the strand, the chief of the escort signalled it to stop and forbade the landing.

In a moment there was a general row – a row, conceivable only by residents of Africa, or those whose ears have been regaled with the chattering of a 'wilderness of monkeys.' Our lusty *factotum* was astonished. The Cockney aspirated his *h*'s with uncommon volubility. We hastened from one to the other to inquire the cause; nor was it until near half an hour had been wasted in palaver that I found they considered themselves slighted, first of all because we had not fired a salvo in their honour, and secondly, because we failed to spread mats from the beach to the house, upon which the bride might place her virgin feet without defilement!

Here, then, was a sad dilemma. The guns could be fired instantly; but where, alas! at a moment's notice, were we to obtain mats enough to carpet the five hundred yards of transit from the river to the house? The match must be broken off!

My crest-fallen Cockney immediately began to exculpate himself by pleading ignorance of the country's customs, assuring the strangers that he had not the slightest inkling of the requirement. Still, the stubborn 'master of ceremonies' would not relax an iota of his rigorous behests.

At length, our bulky dame approached the master of the bridal party, and, squatting on her knees, confessed her neglectful fault. Then, for the first time, I saw a gleam of hope. Joseph improved the moment by alleging that he employed this lady patroness to conduct everything in the sublimest style imaginable, because it was presumed no one knew better than she all that was requisite for so admirable and virtuous a lady as Coomba. Inasmuch, however, as he had been disappointed by her unhappy error, he did not think the blow should fall on *his* shoulders. The negligent matron ought to pay the penalty;

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and, as it was impossible now to procure the mats, she should forfeit the value of a slave to aid the merry-making, and carry the bride on her back from the river to her home!

A clapping of hands and a quick murmur of assent ran through the crowd, telling me that the compromise was accepted. But the portorage was no sinecure for the delinquent, who found it difficult at times to get along over African sands even without a burden. Still, no time was lost in further parley or remonstrance. The muskets and cannon were brought down and exploded; the royal boat was brought to the landing; father, mother, brothers, and relations were paraded on the strand; tom-toms and horns were beaten and blown; and, at last, the suffering missionary waddled to the canoe to receive the veiled form of the slender bride.

The process of removal was accompanied by much merriment. Our porter groaned as she 'larded the lean earth' beneath her ponderous tread; but, in due course of labour and patience, she sank with her charge on the bamboo couch.

As soon as the bearer and the burden were relieved from their fatigue, the maiden was brought to the door, and as her long concealing veil of spotless cotton was unwrapped from head and limbs, a shout of admiration went up from the native crowd that followed us from the quay to the hovel. As Joseph received the hand of Coomba, he paid the princely fee of a slave to the matron.

Coomba had certainly not numbered more than sixteen years, yet, in that burning region, the sex ripen long before their pallid sisters of the North. She belonged to the Soosoo tribe, but was descended from Mandingo ancestors, and I was particularly struck by the uncommon symmetry of her tapering limbs. Her features and head, though decidedly African, were not of that coarse and heavy cast that marks the lineaments of her race. The grain of her shining skin was as fine and polished as ebony. A melancholy languor subdued and deepened the blackness of her large eyes, while her small and even teeth gleamed with the brilliant purity of snow. Her mouth was rosy and even delicate; and, indeed, had not her ankles, feet, and

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wool manifested the unfortunate types of her kindred, the daughter of Mongo-Yungee might have passed for a *chef d'œuvre* in black marble.

The scant dress of the damsel enabled me to be so minute in this catalogue of her charms; and, in truth, had I not inspected them closely, I would have violated matrimonial etiquette as much as if I failed to admire the trousseau and gifts of a bride at home. Like all maidens of her country, she had beads round her ankles, beads round her waist, beads round her neck, while an abundance of bracelets hooped her arms from wrist to elbow. The white *tontongee* still girdled her loins; but Coomba's climate indicated more necessity for ornament than drapery.

As soon as the process of unveiling was over, and time had been allowed the spectators to behold the damsel, her mother led her gently to the fat ambassadress, who, with her companions, bore the girl to a bath for ablution, anointment, and perfuming. While Coomba underwent this ceremony at the hands of our matron, flocks of sable dames entered the apartment; and, as they withdrew, shook hands with her mother, in token of the maiden's purity, and with the groom in compliment to his luck.

As soon as the bath and oiling were over, six girls issued from the hut, bearing the glistening bride on a snow-white sheet to the home of her spouse. The transfer was soon completed, and the burden deposited on the nuptial bed. The dwelling was then closed and put in charge of sentinels; when the plump plenipotentiary approached the Anglo-Saxon, and handing him the scant fragments of the bridal dress, pointed to the door, and, in a loud voice, exclaimed: 'White man, this authorizes you to take possession of your wife!'

It may naturally be supposed that our radiant Cockney was somewhat embarrassed by so public a display of matrimonial happiness, at six o'clock in the afternoon, on the thirtieth day of a sweltering June. Joseph could not help looking at me with a blush and a laugh, as he saw the eyes of the whole crowd fixed on his movements; but, nerving himself like a man, he made a profound *salaam* to the admiring multitude, and shaking my

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hand with a convulsive grip, plunged into the darkness of his abode. A long pole was forthwith planted before the door, and a slender strip of white cotton, about the size of a *tontongee*, was hoisted in token of privacy, and floated from the staff like a pennant, giving notice that the commodore is aboard.

No sooner were these rites over than the house was surrounded by a swarm of women from the adjacent villages, whose incessant songs, screams, chatter, and *tom-tom* beatings drowned every mortal sound. Meanwhile, the men of the party – whose merriment around an enormous bonfire was augmented by abundance of liquor and provisions – amused themselves in dancing, shouting, yelling, and discharging muskets in honour of the nuptials.

Such was the ceaseless serenade that drove peace from the lovers' pillow during the whole of that memorable night. At dawn, the corpulent matron again appeared from among the wild and reeling crowd, and concluding her functions by some mysterious ceremonies, led forth the lank groom from the dark cavity of his hot and sleepless oven, looking more like a bewildered wretch rescued from drowning than a radiant lover fresh from his charmer. In due time, the bride also was brought forth by the matrons for the bath, where she was anointed from head to foot with a vegetable butter – whose odour is probably more agreeable to Africans than Americans – and fed with a bowl of broth made from a young and tender pullet.

The marriage *fêtes* lasted three days, after which I insisted that Joseph should give up nonsense for business, and sobered his ecstasies by handing him a wedding-bill for five hundred and fifty dollars.

My colleague's honeymoon did not last long, although it was not interrupted by domestic discord. One of his Sierra Leone creditors, who had not been dealt with as liberally as the rest, called on the colonial governor of that British establishment, and alleged that a certain Edward Joseph, an Englishman, owned a factory on the Rio Pongo, in company with a Spaniard, and was engaged in the slave-trade!

An expedition was forthwith fitted out to descend upon our

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little establishment; and, in all likelihood, the design would have been executed, had not our friendly Israelite in Sierra Leone sent us timely warning. No sooner did the news arrive than Joseph embarked in a slaver, and, packing up his valuables, together with sixty negroes, fled from Africa. His disconsolate bride was left to return to her parents.

As the hostile visit from the British colony was hourly expected, I did not tarry long in putting a new face on Kambia. Fresh books were made out in my name exclusively; their dates were carefully suited to meet all inquiries; and the townspeople were prepared to answer impertinent questions; so that when Lieutenant Findlay, of Her Britannic Majesty's naval service, made his appearance in the river, with three boats bearing the cross of St. George, no man in the settlement was less anxious than Don Téodore, the *Spaniard*.

When the lieutenant handed me an order from the governor of Sierra Leone and its dependencies, authorizing him to burn or destroy the property of Joseph, as well as to arrest that personage himself, I regretted that I was unable to facilitate his projects, inasmuch as the felon was afloat on salt water, while all his property had long before been conveyed to me by a regular bill of sale. In proof of my assertions, I produced the instrument and the books; and when I brought in our African landlord to sustain me in every particular, the lieutenant was forced to relinquish his hostility and accept an invitation to dinner. His conduct during the whole investigation was that of a gentleman; which, I am sorry to say, was not always the case with his professional countrymen.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

\*

DURING the rainy season, which begins in June and lasts till October, the stores of provisions in establishments along the Atlantic coast often become sadly impaired. The Foulah and Mandingo tribes of the interior are prevented by the swollen condition of intervening streams from visiting the beach with their produce. In these straits, the factories have recourse by canoes to the smaller rivers, which are neither entered by sea-going vessels nor blockaded for the caravans of interior chiefs.

When the rains began to slacken, a petty caravan now and then straggled towards the coast; but as I was only a new-comer in the region, and not possessed of abundant means, I enjoyed a slender share of the trade. Still, I consoled myself with the hope of better luck in the dry season.

In the meantime, however, I not only heard of Joseph's safe arrival at Matanzas, but received a clerk whom he dispatched to dwell in Kambia while I visited the interior. Moreover, I built a boat, and sent her to Sierra Leone with a cargo of palm oil, to be exchanged for British goods; and finally, during my perfect leisure, I went to work with diligence to study the trade in which fortune seemed to have cast my lot.

It would be a task of many pages if I attempted to give a full account of the origin and causes of slavery in Africa. As a national institution, it seems to have existed always. Africans have been bondsmen everywhere: and the oldest monuments bear their images linked with menial toils and absolute servitude. Still, I have no hesitation in saying that three-fourths of the slaves *sent abroad* from Africa are the fruit of native wars, fomented by the avarice and temptation of our own race. I cannot exculpate any commercial nation from this sweeping censure. We stimulate the negro's passions by the introduction of wants and fancies never dreamed of by the simple native, while slavery was an institution of domestic need and comfort alone. But what was once a luxury has now ripened into an absolute necessity; so that Man, in truth, has become the coin of Africa, and the 'legal tender' of a brutal trade.

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England, to-day, with all her philanthropy, sends, under the cross of St. George, to convenient magazines of *lawful commerce* on the coast, her Birmingham muskets, Manchester cottons, and Liverpool lead, all of which are righteously swapped at Sierra Leone, Accra, and on the Gold Coast, for Spanish or Brazilian bills on London. Yet, what British merchant does not know the traffic on which those bills are founded, and for whose support his wares are purchased? France despatches her Rouen cottons, Marseilles brandies, flimsy taffetas, and indescribable variety of tinsel gewgaws. Germany demands a slice for her looking-glasses and beads; while multitudes of our own worthy traders, who would hang a slaver as a pirate *when caught*, do not hesitate to supply him indirectly with tobacco, powder, cotton, Yankee rum, and New England notions, in order to bait the trap in which he *may* be caught. It is the temptation of these things, I repeat, that feeds the slave-making wars of Africa, and forms the human basis of those admirable bills of exchange.

The month of November 1827 brought the wished-for 'dry season'; and with it came a message from the leader of a caravan, that, at the full of the moon, he would halt in my village with all the produce he could impress. The runner represented his master as bearing a missive from his beloved nephew Ahmah-de-Bellah, and declared that he only lingered on the path to swell his caravan for the profit of my coffers.

I did not let the day pass before I sent an interpreter to greet my promised guest with suitable presents; while I took advantage of his delay to build a neat cottage for his reception, inasmuch as no Fullah Mahometan will abide beneath the same roof with an infidel. I furnished the establishment, according to their taste, with green hides and several fresh mats.

This was the first caravan and the first leader of absolutely royal pretensions that visited my settlement; so I lined my piazza with mats, put a body-guard under arms behind me, decorated the front with fancy flags, and opposite the stool where I took my seat, caused a pure white sheepskin of finest

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wool to be spread for the accommodation of the noble savage. Advancing to the steps of my dwelling, I stood uncovered as the Fullah approached and tendered me a silver-mounted gazelle-horn snuff-box – the credential by which Ahmah-de-Bellah had agreed to certify the mission. Receiving the token with a *salaam*, I carried it reverently to my forehead, and passed it to Ali-Ninpha, who, on this occasion, played the part of my scribe. The ceremony over, we took him by the hands and led him to his allotted sheepskin, while, with a bow, I returned to my stool.

According to ‘country custom,’ Mami-de-Yong then began the *dantica*, or exposition of purposes, first of all invoking Allah to witness his honour and sincerity. ‘Not only,’ said the Mussulman, ‘am I the bearer of a greeting from my dear nephew Ahmah-de-Bellah, but I am an envoy from my royal master the Ali-mami, of Footha-Yallon, who, at his son’s desire, has sent me with an escort to conduct you on your promised visit to Timbo. During your absence, my lord has commanded us to dwell in your stead at Kambia, so that your property may be safe from the Mulatto Mongo of Bangalang, whose malice towards your person has been heard of even among our distant hills!’

The latter portion of this message somewhat surprised me, for though my relations with Mongo John were by no means amicable, I did not imagine that the story of our rupture had spread so far, or been received with so much sympathy.

Accordingly, when Mami-de-Yong finished his message, I approached him with thanks for his master’s interest in my welfare, and swore to accept the invitation of the great king of Footha-Yallon.

This terminated the ceremonial reception, after which I hastened to conduct Mami-de-Yong to his quarters, where I presented him with a sparkling new kettle and an inkstand, letting him understand, moreover, I was specially anxious to know that all the wants of his attendants in the caravan were completely satisfied.

Next morning early, I remembered the joy of his nephew

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Ahmah-de-Bellah, when I first treated him to *coffee*; and determined to welcome the chief, as soon as he came forth from his ablutions to prayers, with a cup distilled from the fragrant berry. I could not have hit upon a luxury more gratifying to the old gentleman. Thirty years before had he drank it in Timbuctoo, where it is used, he said, by the Moses-people (meaning the Hebrews), with milk and honey; and its delicious aroma brought the well-remembered taste to his lips ere they touched the fluid.

Long before Mami-de-Yong's arrival, his fame as a learned 'book-man' and extensive traveller preceded him, so that when he mentioned his travel to Timbuctoo, I begged him to give me some account of that 'capital of capitals,' as the Africans call it. The royal messenger promised to comply as soon as he finished the morning lessons of the caravan's children. His quarters were filled with a dozen or more of young Fullahs and Mandingoes squatted around a fire, while the prince sat apart in a corner with inkstand, writing reeds, and a pile of old manuscripts. Ali-Ninpha, our backsliding Mahometan, stood by, pretending devoted attention to Mami's precepts and the Prophet's verses. The sinner was a scrupulous follower in the presence of the faithful; but when their backs were turned, I know few who relished a porker more lusciously, or avoided water with more scrupulous care.

Mami had visited many of the European colonies and Moorish kingdoms on the north coast of Africa, so that he enjoyed the advantage of comparison, and, of course, was not stupefied by the untravelled ignorance of Africans who consider Timbuctoo a combination of Paris and paradise. Indeed, he did not presume like most of the Mandingo chiefs, to prefer it to Senegal or Sierra Leone. He confessed that the royal palace was nothing but a vast enclosure of mud walls, built without taste or symmetry, within whose labyrinthine mesh there were numerous buildings for the wives, children, and kindred of the sovereign. If the royal palace of Timbuctoo was of such a character, 'What,' said he, 'were the dwellings of nobles and townsfolk?' The streets were paths; the stores were shops;

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the suburb of an European colony was superior to their best display! The markets of Timbuctoo, alone, secured his admiration. Every week they were thronged with traders, dealers, peddlers and merchants, who either dwelt in the neighbouring kingdoms or came from afar with slaves and produce. Moors and Israelites, from the north-east, were the most eminent and opulent merchants.

The prince had no mercy on the government of this influential realm. Strangers were watched and taxed. In fact, I found that, despite of its architectural meanness, Timbuctoo was a great central mart for exchange, and that commercial men, as well as the innumerable petty kings, frequented it not only for the abundant mineral salt in its vicinity, but because they could exchange their slaves for foreign merchandise. I asked the Fullah why he preferred the markets of Timbuctoo to the stores of European settlements on a coast which was reached with much more ease than this core of Africa? 'Ah!' said the astute trafficker, 'no market is a good one for the genuine African in which he cannot openly exchange his blacks for whatever the original owner or importer can sell.'

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

HAVING completed the mercantile negotiations of the caravan, and made my personal arrangements for a protracted absence, I put the noble Fullah in charge of my establishment, with special charges to my retainers, clerks, runners, and villagers, to regard the Mami as my second self. I thought it well, moreover, before I plunged into the wilderness – leaving my worldly goods and worldly prospects in charge of a Mussulman stranger – to row down to Bangalang for a parting chat with Mongo John, in which I might sound the veteran as to his feeling and projects. Ormond was in trouble as soon as I appeared. He was willing enough that I might perish by treachery on the roadside, yet he was extremely reluctant that I should penetrate Africa and make alliances which should give me superiority over the monopolists of the beach. I saw these things passing through his jealous heart as we talked together with uncordial civility. At parting I told the Mongo, for the first time, that I was sure my establishment would not go to decay or suffer harm in my absence, inasmuch as that powerful Fullah, the Ali-Mami of Footha-Yallon, had deputed a lieutenant to watch Kambia while I travelled, and that he would occupy my village with his warriors. The mulatto started with surprise, and abruptly left the apartment in silence.

I slept well that night, notwithstanding the Mongo's displeasure. My confidence in the Fullah was perfect. Stranger as he was, I had an instinctive reliance on his protection of my home, and his guardianship of my person through the wilderness.

At day-dawn I was up. It was a fresh and glorious morning. As nature awoke in the woods of that primitive world, the mists stole off from the surface of the water; and as the first rays shot through the glistening dew of the prodigious vegetation, a thousand birds sent forth their songs.

By ten o'clock my caravan was in motion. It consisted of thirty individuals deputed by Ahmah-de-Bellah, headed by

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one of his relations as captain. Ten of my own servants were assigned to carry baggage, merchandise, and provisions; while Ali-Ninpha, two interpreters, my body servant, a waiter, and a hunter composed my immediate guard. In all, there were about forty-five persons.

When we were starting, Mami-de-Yong approached to 'snap fingers,' and put in my hands a verse of the Koran in his master's handwriting – 'hospitality to the wearied stranger is the road to heaven' – which was to serve me as a passport among all good Mahometans. The Fullah chief stooped to the earth, and filling his hands with dust, sprinkled it over our heads in token of a prosperous journey. Then, prostrating himself with his head on the ground, he bad us 'go our way!'

Even the best of African roads are no better than goat-paths, and barely sufficient for the passage of a single traveller. Accordingly, our train marched off in single file. Two men, cutlass in hand, armed, besides, with loaded muskets, went in advance not only to scour the way and warn us of danger, but to cut the branches and briers that soon impede an untraveller path in this prolific land. They marched within hail of the caravan, and shouted whenever we approached bee-trees, ant-hills, hornet-nests, reptiles, or any of the Ethiopian perils that are unheard of in our American forests. Behind these pioneers came the porters with food and luggage; the centre of the caravan was made up of women, children, guards, and followers; while the rear was commanded by myself and the chiefs, who, whips in hand, found it sometimes beneficial to stimulate the steps of stragglers. As we crossed the neighbouring Soosoo towns, our imposing train was saluted with discharges of musketry, while crowds of women and children followed their white man, to bid him farewell on the border of the settlement.

For a day or two our road passed through a rolling country, interspersed with forests, cultivated fields, and African villages, in which we were welcomed by the chiefs with trifling gifts, in token of amity. Used to the scant exercise of a lazy dweller

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on the coast, whose migrations are confined to a journey from his house to the landing, and from the landing to his house, it required some time to habituate me once more to walking. By degrees, however, I overcame the foot-sore weariness that wrapped me in perfect lassitude when I sank into my hammock on the first night of travel. However, as we became better acquainted with each other and with wood-life, we tripped along merrily in the shadowy silence of the forest, singing, jesting, and praising Allah. Even the slaves were relaxed into familiarity never permitted in the towns; while masters would sometimes be seen relieving the servants by bearing their burdens. At nightfall the women brought water, cooked food, and distributed rations; so that, after four days' pleasant way-faring in a gentle trot, our dusty caravan halted at sunset before the closed gates of a fortified town belonging to Ibrahim Ali, the Mandingo chief of Kya.

It was some time before our shouts and beating on the gates aroused the watchman to answer our appeal, for it was the hour of prayer, and Ibrahim was at his devotions. At last, pestered by their dalliance, I fired my double-barrelled gun, whose loud report I knew was more likely to reach the ear of a praying Mussulman. Hardly had the echoes died away before the great war-drum of the town was rattled, while a voice from a loophole demanded our business. I left the negotiation for our entry to the Fullah chief, who forthwith answered that 'the Ali-Mami's caravan, laden with goods, demanded hospitality'; while Ali-Ninpha informed the questioner that the 'white man of Kambia' craved admittance.

In a short time the wicket creaked, and Ibrahim himself put forth his head to welcome the strangers, and to admit them, one by one, into the town. His reception of myself and Ali-Ninpha was extremely cordial; but the Fullah chief was addressed with cold formality, for the Mandingoes have but little patience with their national rivals.

Ali-Ninpha had been Ibrahim's playmate before he migrated to the coast. Their friendship still existed in primitive sincerity, and the chieftain's highest ambition was to honour the

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companion and guest of his friend. Accordingly, his wives and females were summoned to prepare my quarters with comfort and luxury. The best house was chosen for my lodging. The earthen floor was spread with mats. Hides were stretched on *adobe* couches, and a fire was kindled to purify the atmosphere. Pipes were furnished my companions; and while a hammock was slung for my repose before supper, a henchman was despatched to seek the fattest sheep for that important meal.

Ibrahim posted sentinels around my hut, so that my slumbers were uninterrupted, until Ali-Ninpha roused me with the news that the bowls of rice and stews were smoking on the mat in the chamber of Ibrahim himself. Ninpha knew my tastes and superintended the cook. He had often jested at the 'white man's folly,' when my stomach turned at some disgusting dish of the country; so that the pure roasts and broils of well-known pieces slipped down my throat with the appetite of a trooper. While these messes were under discussion, the savoury steam of a rich stew with a creamy sauce saluted my nostrils, and, without asking leave, I plunged my spoon into a dish that stood before my entertainers, and seemed prepared exclusively for themselves. In a moment I was invited to partake of the *bonne-bouche*; and so delicious did I find it that, even at this distance of time, my mouth waters when I remember the forced-meat balls of mutton, minced with roasted ground-nuts, that I devoured that night in the Mandingo town of Kya.

But the best of feasts is dull work without an enlivening bowl. Water alone – pure and cool as it was in this hilly region – did not quench our thirst. Besides this, I recollected the fondness of my landlord, Ali-Ninpha, for strong distillations, and I guessed that his playmate might indulge, at least privately, in a taste for similar libations. I spoke, therefore, of 'cordial bitters' – a name not unfamiliar even to the most temperate Christians, in defence of flatulent stomachs – and at the same time producing my travelling canteen, applied it to the nostrils of the pair.

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By degrees, the brandy did its work on the worthy Mahometans. While it restored Ali-Ninpha to his early faith, and brought him piously to his knees with prayers to Allah, it had a contrary effect on Ibrahim, whom it rendered wild and generous. Everything was mine – house, lands, slaves, and children. He dwelt rapturously on the beauty of his wives, and kissed Ali-Ninpha in mistake for one of them. This only rendered the apostate more devout than ever, and set him roaring invocations like a muezzin from a minaret. In the midst of these orgies, I stole off at midnight, and was escorted by my servant to a delicious hammock.

It was day-dawn when the caravan's crier aroused me, as he stood on a house-top calling the faithful to prayer previous to our departure. Before I could stir, Ali-Ninpha, haggard, sick, and crest-fallen from his debauch, rolled into my chamber, and begged the postponement of our departure, as it was impossible for *Ibrahim Ali* to appear, being perfectly vanquished by 'the bitters.' The poor devil hiccupped between his words, and so earnestly and with so many bodily gyrations implored my interference with the Fullah guide, that I saw at once he was in no condition to travel.

As the caravan was my personal escort and designed exclusively for my convenience, I did not hesitate to command a halt, especially as I was in some measure the cause of my landlord's malady. Accordingly, I tied a kerchief round my head, covered myself with a cloak, and leaning very lackadaisically on the edge of my hammock, sent for the Fullah chief.

I moaned with pain as he approached, and, declaring that I was prostrated by sudden fever, hoped he would indulge me by countermanding the order for our march. I do not know whether the worthy Mussulman understood my case or believed my fever, but he assented to my request like a gentleman, and expressed the deepest sympathy with my sufferings. The chief immediately brought his Koran, and turning over the leaves attentively for some time, at last hit on the appropriate verse, which he wrote down on a board with gunpowder ink, which he washed off into a bowl with clean water.

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This was given me to swallow, and the Mahometan left me to the operation of his religious charm, with special directions to the servant to allow no one to disturb my rest.

I have no doubt that the Fullah was somewhat of a quizz, and thought a chapter in his Bible a capital lesson after a reckless debauch; so I ordered my door to be barricaded, and slept until Ibrahim and Ali-Ninpha came thundering at the portal long after midday. Penitence spoke from their aching brows; nor do I hesitate to believe they were devoutly sincere when they forswore 'bitters' for the future.

When I sallied forth into the town with the suffering sinners, I found the sun fast declining in the west, and, although my fever had left me, it was altogether too late to depart from the village on our journey.

Ere we set forth next morning, my noble host caused a generous meal to be dispensed among the caravan. The breakfast consisted of boiled rice dried in the sun, and then boiled again with milk or water after being pounded finely in a mortar. This nutritive dish was liberally served; and, as a new Mongo, I was tendered an especial platter, flanked by copious bowls of cream and honey.

It is Mandingo etiquette, at the departure of an honoured friend, for the lord of the town to escort him on his way to the first brook, drink of the water with the wayfarer, toast a prompt return, invoke Allah for a prosperous voyage, shake hands, and snap fingers, in token of friendly adieu. The host then, fixing his eyes on the departing guest, never stirs till the traveller is lost in the folds of the forest, or sinks behind the distant horizon.

Such was the conduct of my friend Ibrahim on this occasion; nor was it all. When I sallied forth from the gate of the town, I noticed a horse, ready caparisoned and groomed as for a journey. Being accompanied by Ibrahim on foot, I supposed the animal was designed for his return after our complimentary adieus. But when we had passed at least a mile beyond the parting brook, I *again* encountered the beast, whose leader approached Ali-Ninpha, announcing the horse as a gift from

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his master to help me on my way. Ere I backed the blooded animal, an order was directed to my clerk at Kambia for two muskets, two kegs of powder, two pieces of blue cotton, and one hundred pounds of tobacco. I advised my official, moreover, to enclose in the core of the tobacco the stoutest flask he could find of our fourth proof 'bitters.'

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE day was cloudy, but our trotting caravan did not exceed twenty miles in travel. In Africa things are done leisurely, for neither life, speculation, nor ambition is so exciting or exacting as to make any one in a hurry. I do not recollect to have ever seen an individual *in haste* while I dwelt in the torrid clime. The shortest existence is long enough, when it is made up of sleep, slave-trade, and mastication.

At sunset no town was in sight; so it was resolved to bivouac in the forest on the margin of a beautiful brook, where rice, tea, and beef were speedily boiled and smoking on the mats. When I was about to stretch my weary limbs for the night on the ground, my boy gave me another instance of Ibrahim's true and heedful hospitality, by producing a grass hammock he had secretly ordered to be packed among my baggage. With a hammock and a horse I was on velvet in the forest!

Delicious sleep curtained my swinging couch between two splendid cotton-woods until midnight, when the arm of our Fullah chief was suddenly laid on my shoulder with a whispered call to prepare for defence or flight. As I leaped to the ground the caravan was already afoot, though the profoundest silence prevailed throughout the wary crowd. The watch announced strangers in our neighbourhood, and two guides had been despatched immediately to reconnoitre the forest. This was all the information they could give me.

The native party was fully prepared and alert with spears, lances, bows and arrows. I commanded my own men to reprime their muskets, pistols, and rifles; so that when the guides returned with a report that the intruders were supposed to form a party of fugitive slaves, their capture was promptly determined. Some proposed we should delay till daylight; but Ali-Ninpha, who was a sagacious old fighter, thought it best to complete the enterprise by night, especially as the savages kept up a smouldering fire in the

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midst of their sleeping group, which would serve to guide us.

Our little band was immediately divided into two squads, one under the lead of the Fullah, and the other commanded by Ali-Ninpha. The sleepers were quickly surrounded. The Mandingo gave the signal as soon as the ends of the two parties met and completed the circle; and, in an instant, every one of the runaways, except two, was in the grasp of a warrior, with a cord around his throat. Fourteen captives were brought into camp. The eldest of the party alleged that they belonged to the chief of Tamiisso, a town on our path to Timbo, and were bound to the coast for sale. On their way to the *foreign* factories, which they were exceedingly anxious to reach, their owner died, so that they came under the control of his brother, who threatened to change their destination, and sell them in the interior. In consequence of this they fled; and as their master would surely slay them if restored to Tamiisso, they besought us with tears not to take them thither.

Another council was called, for we were touched by the earnest manner of the negroes. Ali-Ninpha and the Fullah were of opinion that the spoil was fairly ours, and should be divided in proportion to the men in both parties. Yet, as our road passed by the objectionable town, it was impossible to carry the slaves along, either in justice to ourselves or them. In this strait, which puzzled the Africans sorely, I came to their relief by suggesting their despatch to my factory, with orders for the payment of their value in merchandise.

The proposal was quickly assented to as the most feasible, and our fourteen captives were at once divided into two gangs, of seven each. Hoops of bamboo were soon clasped round their waists, while their hands were tied by stout ropes to the hoops. A long tether was then passed with a slip-knot through each rattan belt, so that the slaves were firmly secured to each other, while a small coil was employed to link them more securely in a band by their necks. These extreme precautions were needed, because we dared not diminish our party to guard the gang. Indeed, Ali-Ninpha was only allowed the two inter-

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preters and four of my armed people as his escort to Kya, where, it was agreed, he should deliver the captives to Ibrahim, to be forwarded to my factory, while he hastened to rejoin us at the river Sanghu, where we designed tarrying.

For three days we journeyed through the forest, passing occasionally along the beds of dried-up streams and across lonely tracts of wood which seemed never to have been penetrated, save by the solitary path we were treading. As we were anxious to be speedily reunited with our companions, our steps were not hastened; so that, at the end of the third day, we had not advanced more than thirty miles from the scene of capture, when we reached a small *Mandingo* village, recently built by an upstart trader, who, with the common envy and pride of his tribe, gave our *Fullah* caravan a frigid reception. A single hut was assigned to the chief and myself for a dwelling, and the rage of the Mahometan may readily be estimated by an insult that would doom him to sleep beneath the same roof with a Christian!

I endeavoured to avert an outburst by apprising the Mandingo that I was a bosom friend of Ali-Ninpha, his countryman and superior, and begged that he would suffer the 'head man' of our caravan to dwell in a house *alone*. But the impudent *parvenu* sneered at my advice; 'he knew no such person as Ali-Ninpha, and cared not a snap of his finger for a Fullah chief, or a beggarly white man!'

My body-servant was standing by when this tart reply fell from the Mandingo's lips, and, before I could stop the impetuous youth, he answered the trader with as gross an insult as an African can utter. To this the Mandingo replied by a blow over the boy's shoulders with the flat of a cutlass; and, in a twinkling, there was a general shout from all my party. Fullahs, Mandingoes, and Soosoos dashed to the spot with spears, guns, and arrows. The Fullah chief seized my double-barrelled gun and followed the crowd; and when he reached the spot, seeing the trader still waving his cutlass in a menacing manner, he pulled both triggers at the inhospitable savage. Fortunately, however, it was always my custom on arriving in

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*friendly* towns, to remove the copper caps from my weapons, so that, when the hammers fell, the gun was silent. Before the Fullah could club the instrument and prostrate the insulter, I rushed between them to prevent murder. This I was happy enough to succeed in; but I could not deter the rival tribe from binding the brute, hand and foot, to a post in the centre of his town, while the majority of our caravan cleared the settlement at once of its fifty or sixty inhabitants.

Of course, we appropriated the dwellings as we pleased, and supplied ourselves with provisions. Moreover, it was thought preferable to wait in this village for Ali-Ninpha, than to proceed onwards towards the borders of the Sanghu. When he arrived, on the second day after the sad occurrence, he did not hesitate to exercise the prerogative of judgment and condemnation always claimed by superior chiefs over inferiors, whenever they consider themselves slighted or wronged. A regular trial was allowed the culprit. He was arraigned on three charges :—  
1. Want of hospitality; 2. Cursing and maltreating a Fullah chief and a white Mongo; 3. Disrespect to the name and authority of his countryman and superior, Ali Ninpha. On all these articles the prisoner was found guilty; but, as there were neither slaves nor personal property by which the ruffian could be mulcted for his crimes, the tribunal adjudged him to be scourged with fifty lashes, and to have his 'town-fence or stockade destroyed, never to be rebuilt.' The blows were inflicted for the abuse, but the perpetual demolition of his defensive barrier was in punishment for refused hospitality.

It required three days for our refreshed caravan to reach the dry and precipitous bed of the Sanghu, which I found impossible to pass with my horse, in consequence of jagged rocks and immense boulders that covered its channel. But the men were resolved that my convenient animal should not be left behind. Accordingly, all hands went to work with alacrity on the trees, and in a day they bridged the ravine with logs bound together by ropes made from twisted bark. Across this frail and swaying fabric I urged the horse with difficulty; but hardly

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had he reached the opposite bank, and recovered from his nervous tremor, when I was surprised by an evident anxiety in the beast to return to his swinging pathway. The guides declared it to be an instinctive warning of danger from wild beasts with which the region is filled; and, even while we spoke, two of the scouts who were in advance selecting ground for our camp, returned with the carcasses of a deer and leopard. Though meat had not passed our lips for five days, we were in no danger of starvation; the villages teemed with fruits and vegetables. Pineapples, bananas, and a pulpy globe resembling the peach in form and flavour, quenched our thirst and satisfied our hunger.

Besides these, our greedy natives foraged in the wilderness for nourishment unknown, or at least unused, by civilized folks. They found comfort in barks of various trees, as well as in buds, berries, and roots, some of which they devoured raw, while others were either boiled or made into palatable decoctions with water that gurgled from every hill. The broad valleys and open country supplied animal and vegetable 'delicacies' which a white man would pass unnoticed. Many a time I found my vagabonds in a nook of the woods, luxuriating over a stew copiously filled with 'snails, lizards, iguanas, frogs and alligators!'

Four days brought us to Tamisso from our last halt. We camped on the copious brook that ran near the town-walls, and while Ali-Ninpha thought proper to compliment the chief, Mohamedoo, by a formal announcement of our arrival, the caravan made ready for reception by copious, but *needed*, ablutions of flesh and raiment. The women, especially, were careful in adorning and heightening their charms. Wool was combed to its utmost rigidity; skins were greased till they shone like polished ebony; ankles and arms were restrung with beads; and loins were girded with snowy waistcloths. Ali-Ninpha knew the pride of his old Mandingo companions, and was satisfied that Mohamedoo would have been mortified had we surprised him within the precincts of his court, squatted, perhaps, on a dirty mat with a female scratching his head! Ali-

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Ninpha was a prudent gentleman, and knew the difference between the private and public lives of his illustrious countrymen!

Half-way to the town our turbulent mob was met by a troop of musicians sent out by the chief to greet us with song and harp. I was quickly surrounded by the singers, who chanted the most fulsome praise of the opulent Mongo, while a court-fool or buffoon insisted on leading my horse, and occasionally wiping my face with his filthy handkerchief!

I lost no time in the lull, while relieved from the mob, to pass onward to 'the palace' of Mohamedoo, which, like all royal residences in Africa, consisted of a mud-walled quadrangular enclosure, with a small gate, a large court, and a quantity of *adobe* huts, surrounded by shady verandahs. The furniture, mats, and couches were of cane, while wooden platters, brass kettles, and common wash-basins were spread out in every direction for show and service.

We tarried in Tamisso three days to recruit, during which I was liberally entertained on the prince's hospitable mat, where African stews of relishing flavour, and tender fowls smothered in snowy rice, regaled me at least twice in every twenty-four hours. Mohamedoo fed me with an European silver spoon, which, he said, came from among the effects of a traveller who, many years before, died far in the interior. In all his life he had seen but *four* of our race within the walls of Tamisso. Their names escaped his memory; but the last, he declared, was a poor and clever youth, probably from Senegal, who followed a powerful caravan, and 'read the Koran like a *mufti*.'

The parting between Mohamedoo and myself was friendly in the extreme. Provisions for four days were distributed by the prince to the caravan, and he promised that my return should be welcomed by an abundant supply of slaves.

As our caravan approached the Fullah country, and got into the higher lands, where the air was invigorating, I found its pace improved so much that we often exceeded twenty miles in our daily journey. The next important place we were to

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approach was Jallica. For three days, our path coasted the southern edge of a mountain range, whose declivities and valleys were filled with rivers, brooks, and streamlets, affording abundant irrigation to fields teeming with vegetable wealth. The population was dense. Frequent caravans, with cattle and slaves, passed us on their way to various marts. Our supplies of food were plentiful. A leaf of tobacco purchased a fowl; a charge of powder obtained a basin of milk or a dozen of eggs; and a large sheep cost only six cents, or a quart of salt.

Five days after quitting Tamisso, our approach to Jallica was announced; and here, as at our last resting-place, it was deemed proper to halt half a day for notice and ablution before entering a city, whose chief – Suphiana – was a kinsman of Ali-Ninpha.

The distance from our encampment to the town was about three miles; but an hour had hardly elapsed after our arrival, when the deep boom of the war-drum gave token that our message had been received with welcome. I was prepared, in some measure, for a display of no ordinary character at Jallica, because my Mandingo friend, Ali-Ninpha, inhabited the town in his youth, and had occupied a position which gave importance to his name throughout Soolimana. The worthy fellow had been absent many years from Jallica, and wept like a child when he heard the sound of the war-drum. Its discordant beat had the same effect on the savage that the sound of their village bells has on the spirit of returning wanderers in civilized lands. When the rattle of the drum was over, he told me that for five years he controlled that very instrument in Jallica, during which it had never sounded a retreat or betokened disaster. In peace it was never touched, save for public rejoicing; and the authorities allowed it to be beaten *now* only because an old commander of the tribe was to be received with the honours due to his rank and service.

When the caravan got within fifty yards of the walls, a band of shouting warriors marched forth, and lifting Ali-Ninpha on their shoulders, bore him through the gates, singing war-songs, accompanied by all sorts of music and hubbub.

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Jallica was a fairer town than any I had hitherto encountered in my travels. Its streets were wider, its houses better, its people more civil. No one intruded on the friend of Ali-Ninpha, and guest of Suphiana. I bathed without visits from inquisitive females. My house was my castle; and, when I stirred abroad, two men preceded me with rattans to keep my path clear from women and children.

After lounging about quietly for a couple of days, wearing away fatigue, and getting rid of the stains of travel, I thought it advisable to drop in one morning, unannounced, after breakfast, at Suphiana's with the presents that are customary in the East. As the guest - during my whole journey - of the Ali-Mami, or King of Foota-Yallon, I was entirely exempt by customary law from this species of tax, nor would my Fullah protector have allowed me to offer a tribute had he known it; yet, I always took a secret opportunity to present a voluntary gift, for I wished my memory to smell sweet along my track in Africa. Suphiana fully appreciated my generosity under the circumstances, and returned the civility by an invitation to dinner at the house of his principal wife.

Some superstitious notions about the state of the moon prevented my Fullah guide from departing as soon as I desired; but while we were dallying with the planet, Ali-Ninpha became so ill that he was compelled to halt and end the journey in his favourite Jallica. I rather suspected the Mandingo to feign more suffering than he really experienced, and I soon discovered that his malady was nothing but a sham. In truth, Ali-Ninpha had duped so many Fullah traders on the beach, and owed them the value of so many slaves, that he found it extremely inconvenient, if not perilous, to enter the domain of the Ali-Mami of Footha-Yallon!

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A MESSENGER was despatched from Jallica, in advance of our departure, to announce our approach to Timbo. For six days more, our path led over hill and dale, and through charming valleys, fed by gentle streamlets that nourished the vigorous vegetation of a mountain land.

As we crossed the last summits that overlooked the territory of Footha-Yallon, a broad *plateau*, whence a wide range of country might be beheld, was filled with bands of armed men, afoot and on horseback, while a dozen animals were held in tether by their gaily dressed attendants. I dashed to the head of the caravan on my jaded beast, and reached it to find the arms of Ahmah-de-Bellah opening to greet me! The generous youth, surrounded by his friends and escorted by a select corps of soldiers and slaves, had come thus far on the path to offer the prince's welcome!

The surprise of this complimentary reception was not only delightful as an evidence of African character among these more civilized tribes of the Mahometan interior, but it gave me an assurance of security and trade, which was very acceptable to one so far within the bowels of the land. We were still a day's journey from the capital. Ahmah-de-Bellah declared it impossible, with all the diligence we could muster, to reach Timbo without another halt. Nevertheless, as he was extremely solicitous to bring us to our travel's end, he not only supplied my personal attendants with fresh horses, but ordered carriers from his own guard to charge themselves with the entire luggage of our caravan.

Thus relieved of burden, our party set forth on the path in a brisk trot, and resting after dark for several hours in a village, we entered Timbo unceremoniously before daybreak while its inhabitants were still asleep.

I was immediately conducted to a house specially built for me, surrounded by a high wall to protect my privacy from intrusion. Within, I found a careful duplicate of all the humble comforts in my domicile on the Rio Pongo. Tables, sofas,

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plates, knives, forks, tumblers, pitchers, basins had all been purchased by my friend, and forwarded for this establishment from other factories without my knowledge; while the centre of the main apartment was decorated with an American rocking-chair, which the natives had ingeniously contrived of rattans and bamboo! Such pleasant evidences of refined attention were more remarkable and delicate, because most of the articles are not used by Mahometans.

Ahmah-de-Bellah intimated that the Ali-Mami would soon be prepared to receive me without ceremony. The old gentleman was confined by dropsy in his lower extremities, and found it uncomfortable to sustain the annoyance of public life except when absolutely necessary. Accordingly, when I felt perfectly refreshed, I arose from my matted sofa, and dressing for the first time in more than a month in a perfectly clean suit, I donned a snowy shirt, a pair of dashing drills, Parisian pumps, and a Turkish *fez*, tipped with a copious tassel. Our interpreters were clad in fresh Mandingo dresses adorned with extra embroidery. My body-servant was ordered to appear in a cast-off suit of my own; so that, when I gave one my double-barrelled gun to carry, and armed the others with my pistols, and a glittering regulation-sword – designed as a gift for the Ali-Mami – I presented a very respectable and picturesque appearance for a gentleman abroad on his travels in the East. The moment I issued with my train from the house, a crowd of Fullahs was ready to receive me with exclamations of chattering surprise; still, I was not annoyed, as elsewhere, by the unfailing concourse that followed my footsteps or clogged my pathway.

The 'palace' of the Ali-Mami of Footha-Yallon, like all African palaces in this region, was an *adobe* hovel, surrounded by its portico shed, and protected by a wall from the intrusion of the common herd. In front of the dwelling, beneath the shelter of the verandah, on a fleecy pile of sheepskin mats, reclined the veteran, whose swollen and naked feet were undergoing a cooling process from the palm-leaf fans of female slaves. I marched up boldly in front of him with my military *suite*, and, making a profound *salaam*, was presented by Ahmah-de-Bellah

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as his 'white brother.' The Ali at once extended both hands, and, grasping mine, drew me beside him on the sheepskin. Then, looking intently over my face and into the very depth of my eyes, he asked gently with a smile – 'what was my name?'

'Ahmah-de-Bellah!' replied I, after the fashion of the country. As I uttered the Mahometan appellation, for which I had exchanged my own with his son at Kambia, the old man, who still held my hands, put one of his arms round my waist, and pressed me still closer to his side.

This was followed by a grand inquest in regard to myself and history. Who was my father? Who was my mother? How many brothers had I? Were they warriors? Were they 'book-men?' Why did I travel so far? What delay would I make in Footha-Yallon? Was my dwelling comfortable? Had I been treated with honour, respect and attention on my journey? And, last of all, the prince sincerely hoped that I would find it convenient to dwell with him during the whole of the 'rainy season.'

Several times, in the midst of these interrogations, the patriarch groaned, and I could perceive, from the pain that flitted like a shadow over the nerves and muscles of his face, that he was suffering severely, and, of course, I cut the interview as short as Oriental etiquette would allow.

Timbo lies on a rolling plain. North of it, a lofty mountain range rises at the distance of ten or fifteen miles, and sweeps eastwardly to the horizon. The landscape, which declines from these slopes to the south, is in many places bare; yet fields of plentiful cultivation, groves of cotton-wood, tamarind and oak, thickets of shrubbery and frequent villages, stud its surface, and impart an air of rural comfort to the picturesque scene.

I soon proposed a gallop with my African kindred over the neighbourhood; and, one fine morning, after a plentiful breakfast of stewed fowls, boiled to rags with rice, and seasoned with delicious 'palavra sauce,' we cantered off to the distant villages. As we approached the first brook, but before the fringe of screening bushes was passed, our cavalcade drew rein abruptly,

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while Ahmah-de-Bellah cried out: 'Strangers are coming!' A few moments after, as we slowly crossed the stream, I noticed several women crouched in the underwood, having fled from the bath. This warning is universally given, and enforced by law, to guard the modesty of the gentler sex.

In half an hour we reached the first suburban village; but fame had preceded us with my character, and as the settlement was cultivated either by serfs or negroes liable to be made so, we found the houses bare. The poor wretches had learned, on the day of my reception, that the principal object of my journey was to obtain slaves, and, of course, they imagined that the only object of my foray in their neighbourhood was to seize the gang and bear it abroad in bondage. Accordingly, we tarried only a few minutes in Findo, and dashed off to Furo; but here, too, the blacks had been panic-struck, and escaped so hurriedly that they left their pots of rice, vegetables, and meat boiling in their sheds. Furo was absolutely stripped of inhabitants; the veteran chief of the village did not even remain to do the honours for his affrighted brethren. Ahmah-de-Bellah laughed heartily at the terror I inspired; but I confess I could not help feeling sadly mortified when I found my presence shunned as a pestilence.

My walks through Timbo were promoted by the constant efforts of my entertainers to shield me from intrusive curiosity. Whenever I sallied forth, two townsfolk in authority were sent forward to warn the public that the Furtoo desired to promenade without a mob at his heels. These lusty criers stationed themselves at the corners with an iron triangle, which they rattled to call attention to the king's command; and, in a short time, the highways were so clear of people, who feared a *bastinado*, that I found my loneliness rather disagreeable than otherwise. Every person I saw shunned me. When I called the children or little girls, they fled from me. My reputation as a slaver in the villages, and the fear of a lash in the town, furnished me much more solitude than is generally agreeable to a sensitive traveller.

Towards nightfall I left my companions, and wrapping

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myself closely in a Mandingo dress, stole away through by-ways to a brook which runs by the town walls. Thither the females resort at sunset to draw water; and, choosing a screened situation, where I would not be easily observed, I watched, for more than an hour, the graceful children, girls, and women of Timbo, as they performed this domestic task of Eastern lands.

My trip to Timbo was one of business. Still, while I was there, I thought I might as well see all that was visible. I strolled repeatedly through the town. I became excessively familiar with its narrow streets, low houses, mud walls, cul-de-sacs, and mosques. I saw no fine bazaars, market-places, or shops. The chief wants of life were supplied by peddlers. Platters, jars, and baskets of fruit, vegetables, and meat were borne around twice or thrice daily. Horsemen dashed about on beautiful steeds towards the fields in the morning, or came home at nightfall at a slower pace. *I never saw man or woman bask lazily in the sun.* Females were constantly busy over their cotton and spinning-wheels when not engaged in household occupations; and often have I seen an elderly dame quietly crouched in her hovel at sunset reading the Koran. Nor are the men of Timbo less thrifty. Their city wall is said to hem in about ten thousand individuals, representing all the social industries. They weave cotton, work in leather, fabricate iron from the bar, engage diligently in agriculture, and, whenever not laboriously employed, devote themselves to reading and writing, of which they are excessively fond.

But I was tired of Timbo; I was perfectly refreshed from my journey; and I was anxious to return to my factory on the beach. Two 'moons' only had been originally set apart for the enterprise, and the third was already waxing towards its full. I feared the Ali-Mami was not yet prepared with *slaves* for my departure, and I told the king that a vessel or two, with abundant freights, would be waiting me on the river, and that I must hasten thither with his choicest gangs if he hoped to reap a profit.

War parties and scouts were forthwith despatched to blockade the paths, while press-gangs made recruits among the villages,

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and even in Timbo. Sulimani-Ali himself sallied forth, before daybreak, with a troop of horse, and at sundown came back with forty-five splendid fellows, captured in Findo and Furo!

The personal dread of me in the town itself was augmented. If I had been a Pestilence before, I was Death now! When I took my usual morning walk the children ran from me screaming. Since the arrival of Suliman with his victims, all who were under the yoke thought their hour of exile had come. The poor regarded me as the devil incarnate. Once or twice, I caught women throwing a handful of dust or ashes towards me, uttering an invocation from the Koran to avert the demon or save them from his clutches.

In the midst of the general dismay, caused by the court of Timbo and myself, my coloured brother lost no chance of lecturing me about my soul! We kidnapped the Africans all day and spouted Islamism all night! We spared Mahometans and enslaved only 'the heathen'; so that, in fact, we were merely obedient to the behests of Mahomet when we subdued 'the infidell'

This process of proselytism, however, was not altogether successful. Still, we were very good friends when the Ali-Mami summoned us for a final interview.

The king's relations presented me bullocks, cows, goats, and sheep. His majesty sent me five slaves. Sulimani-Ali offered a splendid white charger. The king's wife supplied me with an African quilt ingeniously woven of red and yellow threads unravelled from Manchester cottons; while Ahmah-de-Bellah, like a gentleman of taste, despatched, for my consolation, the two prettiest handmaidens he could buy or steal in Timbol

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN



I SHALL not weary the reader with a narrative of my journey homeward over the track I had followed on my way to Timbo. A grand Mahometan service was performed at my departure, and Ahmah-de-Bellah accompanied me as far as Jallica, whence he was recalled by his father in consequence of a serious family dispute that required his presence. Ali-Ninpha was prepared, in this place, to greet me with a welcome, and a copious supply of gold, wax, ivory, and slaves. At Tamisso, the worthy Mahomedoo had complied with his promise to furnish a similar addition to the caravan; so that when we set out for Kya, our troop was swelled to near a thousand strong, counting men, women, children and ragamuffins.

At Kya I could not help tarrying four days with my jolly friend Ibrahim, who received the tobacco, charged with 'bitters,' during my absence, and was delighted to furnish a nourishing drop after my long abstinence. As we approached the coast, another halt was called at a favourable encampment, where Ali-Ninpha divided the caravan in four parts, reserving the best portion of slaves and merchandise for me. The division, before arrival, was absolutely necessary, in order to prevent disputes or disastrous quarrels in regard to the merchantable quality of negroes on the beach.

I hoped to take my people by surprise at Kambia; but when the factory came in sight from the hill-tops back of the settlement, I saw the Spanish flag floating from its summit, and heard the cannon booming forth a welcome to the wanderer. Everything had been admirably conducted in my absence. The Fullah and my clerk preserved their social relations and the public tranquillity unimpaired. My factory and warehouse were as neat and orderly as when I left them, so that I had nothing to do but go to sleep as if I had made a day's excursion to a neighbouring village.

Within a week I paid for the caravan's produce, despatched Mami-de-Yong, and made arrangements with the captain of a slaver in the river for the remainder of his merchandise. But

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the Fullah chief had not left me more than a day or two, when I was surprised by a traveller who dashed into my factory, with a message from Ahmah-de-Bellah at Timbo, whence he had posted in twenty-one days.

Ahmah was in trouble. He had been recalled, as I said, from Jallica by family quarrels. When he reached the paternal mat, he found his sister Beeljie bound hand and foot in prison, with orders for her prompt transportation to my factory as a slave. These were the irrevocable commands of his royal father, and of her half-brother, Sulimani. All his appeals, seconded by those of his mother, were unheeded. She must be *shipped* from the Rio Pongo; and no one could be trusted with the task but the Ali-Mami's son and friend, the Mongo Téodore!

To resist this dire command, Ahmah charged the messenger to appeal to my heart by our brotherly love, *not* to allow the maiden to be sent over sea; but, by force or stratagem, to retain her until he arrived on the beach.

The news amazed me. I knew that African Mahometans never sold their caste or kindred into foreign slavery, unless their crime deserved a penalty severer than death. I reflected a while on the message, because I did not wish to complicate my relations with the leading chiefs of the interior; but, in a few moments, natural sensibility mastered every selfish impulse, and I told the envoy to hasten back on the path of the suffering brother, and assure him I would shield his sister, even at the risk of his kindred's wrath.

About a week afterwards I was aroused one morning by a runner from a neighbouring village over the hill, who stated that a courier reached his town the night before from Sulimani-Ali – a prince of Timbo – conducting a Fullah girl, who was to be sold by me *immediately* to a Spanish slaver. The girl, he said, resisted with all her energy. She refused to walk. For the last four days she had been borne along in a litter. She swore never to 'see the ocean'; and threatened to dash her skull against the first rock in her path, if they attempted to carry her further. The stanch refusal embarrassed her Mahometan conductor, inasmuch as his country's law forbade him to use

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extraordinary compulsion, or degrade the maiden with a whip.

I saw at once that this delay and hesitation afforded an opportunity to interfere judiciously in behalf of the spirited girl, whose sins or faults were still unknown to me. Accordingly, I imparted the tale to Ali-Ninpha; and, with his consent, despatched a shrewd dame from the Mandingo's *harem*, with directions for her conduct to the village. I warned her to seize a secret moment when she might win the maiden's confidence, to inform her that I was the sworn friend of Ahmah-de-Bellah, and would save her if she followed my commands implicitly. She must cease resistance at once. She must come to the river, and she must allow her jailers to fulfil all the orders they received from her kinsmen. Muffled in the messenger's garments, I sent the manuscript Koran of Ahmah-de-Bellah as a token of my truth, and bade the dame assure Beeljie that her brother was already far on his journey to redeem her in Kambia.

The mission was successful, and, early next day, the girl was brought to my factory, *with a rope round her neck*. The preliminaries for her purchase were tedious and formal. As her sale was compulsory, there was not much question as to quality or price. Still, I was obliged to promise a multitude of things I did not intend to perform. In order to disgrace the poor creature as much as possible, her sentence declared she should be 'sold for salt,' the most contemptuous of all African exchanges, and used in the interior for the purchase of *cattle* alone.

Poor Beeljie stood naked and trembling before us while these ceremonies were performing. A scowl of indignation flitted like a shadow over her face, as she heard the disgusting commands. Tenderly brought up among the princely brood of Timbo, she was a bright and delicate type of the classes I described at the brookside. Her limbs and features were stained by the dust of travel, and her expression was clouded with the grief of sensible degradation: still, I would have risked more than I did, when I beheld the mute appeal of her face and form, to save her from the doom of Cuban exile.

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When the last tub of salt was measured, I cut the rope from Beeljie's neck, and, throwing over her shoulders a shawl – in which she instantly shrank with a look of gratitude – called the female who had borne my cheering message, to take the girl to her house and treat her as the sister of my Fullah brother.

As I expected, this humane command brought the emissary of Sulimani to his feet with a bound. He insisted on the restitution of the woman! I then softly told him that *the girl should be put on board a slaver in his presence*. Nevertheless, I continued, while the sister of Ahmah was under my roof, her blood must be respected, and she should be treated in every respect as a royal person.

I was quite as curious as the reader may be to know the crime of Beeljie, for, up to that moment, I had not been informed of it. Dismissing the Fullah as speedily as possible, I hastened to Ali-Ninpha's dwelling and heard the sufferer's story.

The Mahometan princess, whose age surely did not exceed eighteen, had been promised by the king and her half-brother, Sulimani, to an old relative, who was not only accused of cruelty to his harem's inmates, but was charged by Mussulmen with the heinous crime of eating 'unclean flesh.' The girl, who seemed to be a person of masculine courage and determination, resisted this disposal of her person; but, while her brother Ahmah was away, she was forced from her mother's arms and given to the filthy dotard.

It is commonly supposed that women are doomed to the basest obedience in Oriental lands; yet, it seems there is a Mahometan law – or at least a Fullah custom – which saves the purity of an unwilling bride. The delivery of Beeljie to her brutal lord kindled the fire of an ardent temper. She furnished the old gentleman with specimens of violence to which his harem had been a stranger, save when the master himself chose to indulge in wrath. In fact, the Fullah damsel – half acting, half in reality – played the virago so finely, that her husband, after exhausting arguments, promises and supplications, sent her back to her kindred with an insulting message.

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It was a sad day when she returned to the paternal roof in Timbo. Her resistance was regarded by the dropsical despot as rebellious disobedience to father and brother; and as neither authority nor love would induce the outlaw to repent, her barbarous parent condemned her to be 'a slave to Christians.'

Her story ended, I consoled the poor maiden with every assurance of protection and comfort; for, now that the excitement of sale and journey was over, her nerves gave way, and she sank on her mat, completely exhausted. I commended her to the safeguard of my landlord and the especial kindness of his women. Esther, too, stole up at night to comfort the sufferer with her fondling tenderness, for she could not speak the Fullah language; and in a week, I had the damsel in capital condition ready for a daring enterprise that was to seal her fate.

When the Spanish slaver, whose cargo I had just completed, was ready for sea, I begged her captain to aid me in the shipment of 'a princess' who had been consigned to my wardship by her royal relations in the interior, but whom I dared not put on board his vessel until she was beyond the Rio Pongo's bar. The officer assented; and when the last boat-load of slaves was despatched from my *barracoon*, he lifted his anchor and floated down the stream till he got beyond the furthest breakers. Here, with sails loosely furled, and everything ready for instant departure, he again laid to.

In the meantime, I hurried Beeljie with her friends and Fullah jailer to the beach, so that when the slaver threw his sails aback and brought his vessel to the wind, I lost not a moment in putting the girl in a canoe, with five Kroomen to carry her through the boiling surf.

'Allah be praised!' sighed the Fullah, as the boat shot ahead into the sea; while the girls of the harem fell on the sand with wails of sorrow. The Kroomen, with their usual skill, drove the buoyant skiff swiftly towards the slaver; but as they approached the breakers south of the bar, a heavy roller struck it on the side, and instantly, its freight was struggling in the surge.

In a twinkling, the Fullah was on the earth, his face buried

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in the sand; the girls screamed and tore their garments; Ali-Ninpha's wife clung to me with the grasp of despair; while I, stamping with rage, cursed the barbarity of the maiden's parent, whose sentence had brought her to this wretched fate.

I kicked the howling hypocrite beneath me, and bade him hasten with the news to Timbo, and tell the wicked patriarch that the Prophet himself had destroyed the life of his wretched child sooner than suffer her to become a Christian's slave.

The Spanish vessel was under full sail, sweeping rapidly out to sea, and the Kroomen swam ashore without their boat, as the grieving group slowly and sadly retraced their way along the river's bank to Kambia.

There was wailing that night in the village, and there was wailing in Timbo when the Fullah returned with the tragic story. In fact, such was the distracted excitement both on the sea-shore and in the settlement that none of my companions had eyes to observe an episode of the drama which had been played that evening.

Kroomen are altogether unaware of any difference between a smooth river and the angriest wave. I took advantage of this amphibious nature, to station a light canoe immediately on the edge of the breakers, and to order the daring swimmers it contained to grasp the girl the moment her canoe was purposely upset! I promised the divers a liberal reward if they lodged her in their boat, or swam with her to the nearest point of the opposite beach; and so well did they perform their secret task that when they drew ashore her fainting body, it was promptly received by a trusty Bager, who was in waiting on the beach. Before the girl recovered her senses she was safely afloat in the fisherman's canoe. His home was in a village on the coast below; and, perhaps, it still remains a secret to this day, how it was that, for years after, a girl, the image of the lost Beeljie, followed the footsteps of Ahmah, the Fullah of Timbo.

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN



AFTER my toilsome journey to the interior, my despatch of a slaver, and my adventurous enterprise in behalf of a Fullah princess, I thought myself entitled to a long siesta; but my comfortable desires and anticipations were doomed to disappointment. I was suddenly stirred from this willing lethargy by a salute of twenty-one guns in the offing. Our wonder was almost insupportable as to the character of the ceremonious stranger who wasted powder so profusely, while a boy was despatched to the top of the look-out tree to ascertain his character. He reported a schooner anchored opposite Bangalang, sporting a long pendant at the main, and a white ensign at her peak. I took it for granted that no man-of-war would salute a native chief, and so concluded that it was some pretentious Frenchman, unacquainted with the customs of our demure coast.

The conjecture was right. At nightfall Mr. Ormond—whose humour had somewhat improved since my return—apprised me that a Gallic slaver had arrived to his consignment with a rich cargo, and hoped I would join him at breakfast on board, by invitation of the commander.

Next morning, at sunrise, the Mongo and myself met for the first time after our rupture with apparent cordiality on the deck of *La Perouse*, where we were welcomed with all that cordiality of grimace for which a half-bred Frenchman is so justly celebrated. Captain Brulôt could not speak English, nor could Mr. Ormond express himself in French; so we wasted the time till breakfast was served in discussing his cargo and prospects, through my interpretation. Fine samples of gaudy calicoes, French guns, and superior brandy were exhibited and dwelt on with characteristic eloquence; but the Gaul closed his catalogue with five hundred doubloons. The scent of gold has a peculiar charm to African slavers, and it will readily be supposed that our appetite was not a little stimulated. As rapidly as we could, we summed up the doubloons and his merchandise; and, estimating the entire cargo at about \$17,000,

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offered him 350 negroes for the lot. The bid was no sooner made than accepted. Our private boats were sent ashore in search of canoes to discharge the goods, and with a relish and spirit I never saw surpassed, we sat down to a piquant breakfast, spread on deck beneath the awning.

When the last bumper was quaffed in honour of *La Perouse* and *belle France*, Captain Brulôt called for his writing-desk; when, at the instant, four men sprung up as if by enchantment behind the Mongo and myself, and grasping our arms with the grip of a vice, held us in their clutches till the carpenter riveted a shackle on our feet.

When our limbs were perfectly secure, the French scoundrel, approaching Mr. Ormond with a sarcastic simper, apprised him that the *petite comédie* in which he took part had been enacted for the collection of a trifling debt which his excellency the Mongo owed a beloved brother, who, alas! was no longer on earth to collect it for himself!

*Monsieur le Mongo*, he said, would have the kindness to remember that, several years ago, his brother had left some two hundred slaves in his hands until called for; and he would also please to take the trouble to recollect that the said slaves had been twice sent for, and twice refused. *Monsieur le Mongo* must know, he continued, that there was not much law on the coast of Africa; and that, as he had *Monsieur le Mongo's* promissory note, or due-bill, for the negroes, he thought this charming little *ruse* would be the most amiable and practical mode of enforcing it! Did his friend, *le Mongo*, intend to honour this draft? It was properly endorsed, he would see, in favour of the bearer; and if the *esclaves* were quickly forthcoming, the whole affair would pass off as agreeably and quickly as the bubbles from a champagne glass.

By this time Ormond was so perfectly stupified by drink, as well as the atrocity, that he simply burst into a maudlin laugh, when I looked at him for an explanation of the charge. *I*, surely, was not implicated in it; yet, when I demanded the cause of the assault upon *my* person, in connection with the affair, Brulôt replied, with a shrug, that as I was Ormond's

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clerk when the note was signed, I must have had a finger in the pie; and, inasmuch as I now possessed a factory of my own, it would doubtless be delightful to aid my ancient patron in the liquidation of a debt that I knew to be lawful.

It was altogether useless to deny my presence in the factory, or knowledge of the transaction, which, in truth, had occurred long before my arrival on the Rio Pongo, during the clerkship of my predecessor. Still, I insisted on immediate release. An hour flew by in useless parley. But the Frenchman was firm, and swore that nothing would induce him to liberate either of us without payment of the bill. While we were talking, a crowd of canoes was seen shoving off from Bangalang, filled with armed men; whereupon the excited Gaul ordered his men to quarters, and double-shotted his guns.

As the first boat came within striking distance, a ball was fired across her bows, which not only sent back the advance, but made the entire fleet tack ship and steer homeward in dismay. Soon after, however, I heard the war-drum beating in Bangalang, and could see the natives mustering in great numbers along the river banks; yet, what could undisciplined savages effect against our six-pounders? At sunset, however, my clerk came off, with a white flag, and the captain allowed him to row alongside to receive our orders in his presence. Ormond was not yet in a state to consult as to our appropriate means of rescue from the trickster's clutches; so I directed the young man to return in the morning with changes of raiment; but, in the meanwhile, to desire the villagers of both settlements to refrain from interference in our behalf. An excellent meal, with abundance of claret, was served for our entertainment, and, on a capital mattress, we passed a night of patient endurance in our iron stockings.

At daylight, water and towels were served for our refreshment. After coffee and cigars were placed on the board, Brulôt demanded whether we had come to our senses and intended to pay the debt? I said nothing. Ormond, however – now entirely sober, and who was enjoying a cigar with the habitual *insouciance* of a mulatto – replied quietly that he

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could make no promises or arrangements whilst confined on board, but if allowed to go ashore, he would fulfil his obligation in two or three days. An hour was spent by the Frenchman in pondering on the proposal; when it was finally agreed that the Mongo should be set at liberty, provided he left, as hostages, four of his children and two of the black chiefs who visited him in my boat. The compact was sealed by the hoisting of a flag under the discharge of a blank cartridge; and, in an hour, the pledges were in the cabin, under the eye of a sentry, while the Mongo was once more in Bangalang.

These negotiations, it will be perceived, did not touch *my* case, though I was in no manner guilty; yet I assented to the proposal because I thought that Ormond would be better able than myself to find the requisite number of slaves at that moment. I ordered my clerk, however, to press all the indifferent and useless servants in my factory, and to aid the Mongo with every slave at present in my *barracoon*.

Before sunset of that day, this young man came aboard with fifty negroes from my establishment, and demanded my release. It was refused. Next day forty more were despatched by the Mongo; but still my liberty was denied.

It was a task of difficulty to collect the remaining 110 slaves among factories which had been recently drained by Cuban vessels. Many domestic menials escaped to the forest when the story became known, as they did not wish to take the place of their betters in the 'French service.'

Thrice had the sun risen and set since I was a prisoner. Never did I cease to pray for the arrival of some well-armed Spanish slaver; and, towards evening of the fourth day, the boon was granted! That afternoon a boat manned by negroes passed with the Spanish flag; but as there was no white man aboard, Brulôt took it for a *ruse* of the Mongo, designed to alarm him into an unconditional release of his captives.

I slept soundly that night; but the sun was not clear of the forest when I hobbled on deck in my shackles, and was searching the seaward horizon for my beloved Castilian. Presently the breeze began to freshen, and the tall, raking

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masts of a schooner were seen gliding above the tops of the mangroves that masked the Rio Pongo's mouth. Very soon the light wind and tide drifted her clear of the bends, and an anchor was let go within musket-shot of my prison, while springs were run out to the bushes to give range to her broadside. I saw at once from her manœuvres that Ormond had communicated with the craft during the night.

Brulôt felt that his day was over. The Spaniard's decks were crowded with an alert, armed crew; four little bull-dogs showed their muzzles from port-holes; while a large brass swivel amidships gave token of its readiness to fight or salute. For a minute or two the foiled Frenchman surveyed the scene through his glass; then, throwing it over his shoulder, ordered the mate to strike off my 'darbies.' As the officer obeyed, a voice was heard from the Spaniard, commanding a boat to be sent aboard, under penalty of a shot if not instantly obeyed. The boat was lowered; but who would man her? The chief officer refused; the second declined; the French sailors objected; the creoles and mulattoes from St. Thomas went below; so that no one was left to fulfil the slaver's order but Brulôt or myself.

By this time the Spaniard had lighted his matches, levelled his guns, and, under the aim of his musketry, repeated the order for a boat. Seeing the danger of our party, I leaped to the bulwarks, and hailing my deliverer in Spanish, bade him desist. The request was obeyed as I threw myself into the yawl, cut the rope, and, alone, sculled the skiff to the slaver.

A shout went up from the deck of my deliverer as I jumped aboard and received the cordial grasp of her commander. Ali-Ninpha, too, was there to greet and defend me with a chosen band of his people. While I was absorbed in the joy of welcome and liberation, the African stole with his band to the Frenchman's boat, and was rapidly filling it to board the foe, when my clerk apprised me of the impending danger. I was fortunate enough to control the enraged savage, else I know not what might have been the fate of Brulôt and the officers during the desertion of his mongrel and cowardly crew.

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The captain desired his mates to keep an eye on the Gaul while we retired to the cabin for consultation; and here I learned that I was on board the *Esperanza*, consigned to me from Matanzas. In turn, I confirmed the account they had already heard of my mishap from the Mongo's messengers; but hoped the Cuban captain would permit me to take pacific revenge after my own fashion, inasmuch as my captor – barring the irons – had behaved with uncommon civility. I had no trouble, of course, in obtaining the commander's assent to this request, though he yielded it under the evident displeasure of his crew, whose Spanish blood was up against the Frenchman, and would willingly have inflicted a signal punishment on this neutral ground.

After these preliminaries, Captain Escudero and myself returned to the *La Perouse* with two boat-loads of armed followers, while our approach was covered by the cannons and small arms of the *Esperanza*. Brulôt received us in moody silence on the quarter-deck. His officers sat sulkily on a gun to leeward, while two or three French seamen walked to and fro on the forecastle.

My first command was to spike the vessel's guns. Next, I decreed and superintended the disembarkation of the stolen slaves; and, lastly, I concluded the morning call with a request that Brulôt would produce the 500 doubloons and his 'promissory note' for 200 slaves.

The document, duly endorsed, was quickly delivered, but no persuasion or threat induced the angry Gaul to show his gold, or a manifest of the cargo.

After ample indulgence, I despatched a man to seek his writing-desk, and discovered that 600 doubloons had in reality been shipped in St. Thomas. Of course, their production was imperiously demanded; but Brulôt swore they had been landed, with his supercargo, in the neighbouring Rio Nunez. I was near crediting the story, when a slight sneer I perceived flickering over the steward's face put me on the *qui vive* to request an inspection of the log-book, which, unfortunately for my captor, did not record the disembarkation

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of the cash. This demonstrated Brulôt's falsehood, and authorized a demand for his trunk. The knave winced as the steward descended to bring it; and he leaped with rage as I split it with a hatchet, and counted 250 Mexican doubloons on the deck. *His cargo, however, proved to be a sham of samples.*

Turning innocently to Escudero, I remarked that he must have been put to considerable trouble in rescuing me from this outlaw, and hoped he would suffer his men to be recompensed for their extra toil under the rays of an African sun. I would not venture to judge the value of such devoted services; but requested him to fix his own price and receive payment on the spot.

Escudero very naturally supposed that *about* 250 Mexican ounces would compensate him and, accordingly, the 250 shiners, glistening on the deck, forthwith returned to their bag and went overboard into his boat.

## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN



*La Esperanza* discharged her cargo rapidly, but, before I was ready to send back a living freight, poor Escudero fell a victim to African fever.

I had seen much of the country; I had made some money; my clerk was a reliable fellow; I was growing somewhat anxious for a change of scene; and, in fact, I only wanted a decent excuse to find myself once more aboard a 'skimmer of the seas,' for a little relaxation after the oppressive monotony of a slaver's life. Escudero's death seemed to offer the desired opportunity. His mate was an inexperienced seaman; his officers were unacquainted with the management of a slave cargo; and, upon a view of the whole field of interest, I thought it best to take charge of the schooner and pay a visit to my friends in Cuba. In the meantime, however, a Danish brig arrived for negroes, so that it became necessary for me, with my multiplied duties, to bestir myself in the collection of slaves.

Whilst I was dining one afternoon at Ormond's factory with the Danish captain of the trader, the boom of a gun, followed rapidly by two or three more, announced the arrival of another craft. We drank a toast to his advent, and were beginning to condole a little over our difficulty in procuring blacks, when the look-out ran into our room with the report that my Spaniard was firing into the Dane. We rushed to the piazza whence the scene of action might be beheld, and another shot from my vessel seemed to indicate that she was the aggressor. The Dane and myself hurried aboard our respective schooners, but when I reached the *Esperanza*, my crew were weighing anchor, while the quarter-deck was strewn with fire-arms. The mate stood on the heel of the bowsprit, urging his men to alacrity; the sailors hove at the windlass with mingled shouts of passion and oaths of revenge; on a mattress lay the bleeding form of my second officer, while a seaman groaned beside him with a musket ball in his shoulder.

My arrival was the signal for a pause. As quickly as possible, I inquired into the affray, which had originated like many a

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sailor's dispute, on a question of precedence at the watering-place in a neighbouring brook. The Danes were seven, and we but three. Our Spaniards had been driven off, and my second mate, in charge of the yawl, received a blow from an oar-blade, which cut his skull and felled him senseless on the sand.

Of course, the watering was over for the day, and both boats returned to their vessels to tell their stories. The moment the Danes got on board, they imprudently ran up their ensign; and as this act of apparent defiance occurred just as the *Esperanza* was receiving the lifeless form of her officer, my excited crew discharged a broadside in reply to the warlike token. Gun followed gun, and musketry rattled against musketry. The Dane miscalculated the range of the guns, and his grape fell short of my schooner, while our sixes made sad havoc with his bulwarks and rigging.

I had hardly learned the facts of the case and thought of a truce, when the passionate Northman sent a round shot whistling over my head. Another and another followed in its wake, but they aimed too high for damage. At twenty-four our blood is not so diplomatically pacific as in later years. I slipped my cable and ran up the jib and mainsail, so as to swing the schooner into a raking position at short quarters; and before the Dane could counteract my manœuvre, I gave him a dose of grape and cannister which tore his ensign to ribbons and spoiled the looks of his hull materially. My second shot splintered the edge of his mast; but while I was making ready for a third, to tickle him betwixt wind and water, down tumbled his impertinent pendant and the day was won.

For a while there was a dead silence between the warriors. Neither hailed nor sent a boat on board of the other. Ormond perceived this cessation of hostilities from his piazza at Bangalang, and coming out in a canoe, rowed to the Dane after hearing my version of the battle.

I waited anxiously either for his return or a message, but as I was unadvised of the Mongo's views and temper in regard

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to the affray, I thought it well, before dark, to avoid treachery by quitting the river and placing my schooner in a creek with her broadside to the shore. Special charge was then given to the mate and men to be alert all night long; after which, I went on shore to protect the rear by placing my factory in a state of defence.

But my precautions were needless. At daylight the guard brought us news of the Dane's departure, and when I descended the river to Bangalang, Ormond alleged that the slaver had sailed for Sierra Leone to seek succour either from a man-of-war or the British Government.

It may be supposed that I was not so 'green' in Africa as to believe this story. No vessel, equipped for a slave cargo, would dare to enter the imperial colony. Yet the Northman had bitter cause for grief and anger. His vessel was seriously harmed by my grape-shot; his carpenter was slain during the action; and three of his seamen were lingering with desperate wounds. In a few days, however, he returned to the Rio Pongo from his airing on the Atlantic, where his wrath had probably been somewhat cooled by the sea-breeze. His craft was anchored higher up the river than my Spaniard, and thus our crews avoided intercourse for the future.

But this was not the case with the captains. The Mongo's table was a sort of neutral ground, at which we met with cold salutations but without conversation. Ormond and the Dane, however, became exceedingly intimate. Accordingly, I made it 'worth the while' of Ormond's body-servant to sift the secret of this sudden devotion; and in a few days the faithless slave, who spoke English remarkably well, told me that the Dane, by dint of extra pay and the secret delivery of all his spare provisions and the balance of his cargo, had induced the Mongo to promise the delivery of his slaves before mine.

Now, Ormond, by a specific contract – made and paid for before the Dane's arrival – owed me 200 negroes on account of the *Esperanza's* cargo. The Dane knew this perfectly, but my severe chastisement rankled in his heart, and made him seek revenge in the most effectual way on the coast of Africa.

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He was bent upon depriving me of 100 negroes, in the hands of Mr. Ormond.

I kept my eye on Ormond's *barracoon* until I found his stock had gradually augmented to 300. Thereupon, I dropped in one morning unceremoniously, and, in a gentle voice, told him of his treacherous design. My ancient patron was so degraded by debauchery that he not only avoided a passionate outburst when I made the charge, but actually seemed to regard it as a sort of capital joke, or recompense for the damage I had inflicted on the Dane! I resolved to *outbid* the Dane, for I thought I possessed a card that could take him. Accordingly, I offered to surrender a bond for 100 slaves he owed me on account of the *Esperanza*; I promised, moreover, 150 negroes, to be delivered that evening – and I tendered Brulôt's promissory note for the missing 200 – if he would pledge himself to load the Dane during the succeeding night!

Ormond took the hint like tinder, and grasped my hand on the bargain. The Dane was ordered to prepare his vessel to receive cargo without delay, and was specially desired to drop down about fifteen miles towards the bar, so as to be off the moment his slaves were under hatches.

For the next six hours there was not a busier bee on the Rio Pongo than Don Téodore. My schooner was put in ship-shape for cargo. The mate was ordered to have his small arms and cutlasses in perfect condition. Our pivot gun was double-loaded with chain-shot. My factory was set in order, and written directions given the clerk in anticipation of a four months' absence. Ali-Ninpha was put in charge of the territorial domain, while my Spaniard was entrusted with the merchandise.

Night came on. My long boat was quickly filled with ten men, armed with pistol and cutlass; and in a short time, the canoes from Bangalang hove in sight with their burden. I boarded the first one myself, commanding the rowers to pull for my Spaniard. The second was seized by the mate, who followed in my wake. The third, fourth, fifth and sixth shared the same fate in rapid succession; so that, in an hour, 375

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negroes were safe beneath the *Esperanza's* deck. Thereupon, I presented the headman of each canoe a document acknowledging the receipt of his slaves, and wrote an order on the Mongo *in favour of the Dane*, for the full amount of the darkies I had borrowed!

The land wind sprang up and the tide turned when daylight warned me it was time to be off; and as I passed the Dane at anchor just inside the bar, I called all hands to give three cheers.

## CHAPTER NINETEEN



WHEN the land breeze died away, it fell entirely calm, and the sea continued an unruffled mirror for three days, during which the highlands remained in sight, like a faint cloud in the east. The glaring sky and the reflecting ocean acted and reacted on each other until the air glowed like a furnace. During night a dense fog enveloped the vessel with its clammy folds. When the vapour lifted on the fourth morning, our look-out announced a sail from the mast-head, and every eye was quickly sweeping the landward horizon in search of the stranger. Our spies along the beach had reported the coast clear of cruisers when I sailed, so that I hardly anticipated danger from men-of-war; nevertheless, we held it discreet to avoid intercourse, and accordingly, our double-manned sweeps were rigged out to impel us slowly towards the open ocean. Presently, the mate went aloft with his glass, and, after a deliberate gaze, exclaimed: 't is only the Dane – I see his flag.' At this my crew swore they would sooner fight than sweep in such a latitude; and, with three cheers, came aft to request that I would remain quietly where I was until overhauled.

The prudent slaver, as soon as he finds himself in the neighbourhood of unwholesome canvas, puts out his fire, nails his fore-castle, sends his negroes below, and secures the gratings over his hatches. All these preparations were quietly made on board the *Esperanza*; and, in addition, I ordered a supply of small arms and ammunition on deck, where they were instantly covered with blankets. Every man was next stationed at his post, or where he might be most serviceable. The cannons were sponged and loaded with care; and, as I desired to deceive our new acquaintance, I ran up the Portuguese flag.

I paced the deck for half an hour beneath the awning, when, seizing a telescope and mounting the rigging, I saw, or fancied I saw, a row of ports, which the Dane had not: then sweeping the horizon a little astern of the craft, I distinctly made out three boats, fully manned, making for us with ensigns flying. In fact, our antagonist was unquestionably a British cruiser

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of ten or twelve guns, from whose clutches there was no escape, unless we repulsed the boats.

I found my crew as confident in the face of augmented risk as they had been when we expected the less perilous Dane. Collecting their votes for fight or surrender, I learned that all but two were in favour of resistance. I threw overboard several water-casks that encumbered the deck, and hoisted our boat to the stern-davits to prevent boarding in that quarter. Things were perfectly ship-shape all over the schooner, and I congratulated myself that her power had been increased by two twelve-pound carronades, the ammunition, and part of the crew of a Spanish slaver, abandoned on the bar of Rio Pongo a week before my departure. We had in all seven guns, and abundance of musketry, pistols and cutlasses, to be wielded and managed by thirty-seven hands.

By this time the British boats, impelled by oars alone, approached within half a mile, while the breeze sprang up in cat's-paws all round the eastern horizon, but without fanning us with a single breath. Taking advantage of one of these slants, the cruiser had followed her boats, but now, about five miles off, was again as perfectly becalmed as *we* had been all day. Presently, I observed the boats converge within the range of my swivel, and lay on their oars as if for consultation. I seized this opportunity, while the enemy was huddled together, to give him the first welcome; and, slewing the schooner round with my sweeps, I sent him a shot from my swivel. But the ball passed over their heads, while, with three cheers, they separated, the largest boat making directly for our waist, while the others steered to cross our bow and attack our stern.

During the chase my weapons, with the exception of the pivot gun, were altogether useless, but I kept a couple of sweeps ahead and a couple astern to play the schooner. The larger boat, bearing a small carronade, was my best target, yet we contrived to miss each other completely until my sixth discharge, when a double-headed shot raked the whole bank of starboard oar-blades, and disabled the rowers by the severe concussion. This paralysed the launch's advance, and allowed

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me to devote my exclusive attention to the other boats; yet, before I could bring the schooner in a suitable position, a signal summoned the assailants aboard the cruiser to repair damages. I did not reflect until this moment of reprieve that, early in the day, I had hoisted the Portuguese ensign to deceive the Dane, and imprudently left it aloft in the presence of *John Bull*! I struck the false flag at once, unfurled the Spanish, and refreshing the men with a double allowance of grog and grub, put them again to the sweeps. When the cruisers reached their vessels, the men instantly re-embarked, while the boats were allowed to swing alongside, which convinced me that the assault would be renewed as soon as the rum and roast-beef of Old England had strengthened the heart of the adversary. Accordingly, noon had not long passed when our pursuers again embarked. Once more they approached, divided as before, and again we exchanged ineffectual shots. I kept them at bay with grape and musketry until near three o'clock, when a second signal of retreat was hoisted on the cruiser, and answered by exultant *vivas* from my crew.

I was sure that the lion retreated to make a better spring, nor was I less disheartened when the mate reported that nearly all the ammunition for our cannons was exhausted. Seven kegs of powder were still in the magazine, though not more than a dozen rounds of grape, cannister, or balls remained in the locker. There was still an abundance of cartridges for pistols and musketry, but these were poor defences against resolute Englishmen whose blood was up and who would unquestionably renew the charge with reinforcements of vigorous men. Fore and aft, high and low, we searched for missiles. Musket balls were crammed in bags; bolts and nails were packed in cartridge paper; slave shackles were formed with rope yarns into chain-shot; and, in an hour, we were once more tolerably prepared.

When these labours terminated, I turned my attention to the relaxed crew, portions of whom refused wine, and began to sulk about the decks. As yet only two had been slightly scratched by spent musket balls; but so much discontent began

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to appear among the passenger-sailors of the wrecked slaver that my own hands could, with difficulty, restrain them from revolt. Violence was clearly not my rôle, but persuasion was a delicate game in such straits among men whom I did not command with the absolute authority of a master. I cast my eye over the taffrail, and seeing that the British boats were still afar, I followed my first impulse, and calling the whole gang to the quarter-deck, tried the effect of palaver and Spanish gold. I spoke of the perils of capture and of the folly of surrendering *a slaver* while there was the slightest *hope* of escape. I painted the unquestionable result of being taken after such resistance as had already been made. I drew an accurate picture of a tall and dangerous instrument on which piratical gentlemen have sometimes been known to terminate their lives; and finally, I attempted to improve my oratory by a couple of golden ounces to each combatant, and the promise of a slave apiece at the end of our voyage.

My suspense was terrible, as there – on the deck of a slaver, amid calm, heat, battle, and mutiny, with a volcano of 375 imprisoned devils below me – I awaited a reply, which, favourable or unfavourable, I must hear without emotion. Presently, three or four came forward and accepted my offer. I shrugged my shoulders, and took half a dozen turns up and down the deck. Then, turning to the crowd, I doubled my bounty, and offering a boat to take the recusants on board the enemy, swore that I would stand by the *Esperanza* with my unaided crew in spite of the *dastards*!

The offensive word with which I closed the harangue seemed to touch the right string of the Spanish guitar, and in an instant I saw the dogged heads spring up with a jerk of mortified pride, while the steward and cabin-boy poured in a fresh supply of wine, and a shout of union went up from both divisions. I lost no time in confirming my converts; and, ramming down my eloquence with a wad of doubloons, ordered every man to his post, for the enemy was again in motion.

But he did not come alone. New actors had appeared on the scene during my engagement with the crew. The sound of the

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cannonade had been heard, it seems, by a consort of His Britannic Majesty's brig; and, although the battle was not within her field of vision, she despatched another squadron of boats under the guidance of the reports that boomed through the silent air.

The first division of my old assailants was considerably in advance of the reinforcement; and, in perfect order, approached us in a solid body, with the apparent determination of boarding on the same side. Accordingly, I brought all my weapons and hands to that quarter, and told both gunners and musketeers not to fire without orders. Waiting their discharge, I allowed them to get close; but the commander of the launch seemed to anticipate my plan by the reservation of his fire till he could draw mine, in order to throw his other boat-loads on board under the smoke of his swivel and small arms. It was odd to witness our mutual forbearance, nor could I help laughing, even in the midst of danger, at the mutual checkmate we were trying to prepare. However, my Britons did not avoid pulling though they omitted firing, so that they were already rather perilously close when I thought it best to give them the contents of my pivot, which I had crammed almost to the muzzle with bolts and bullets. The discharge paralysed the advance, while my carronades flung a quantity of grape into the companion boats. In turn, however, they plied us so deftly with balls from swivels and musketry that five of our most valuable defenders writhed in death on the deck.

The rage of battle at closer quarters than heretofore, and the screams of bleeding comrades beneath their feet, roused to its fullest extent the ardent nature of my Spanish crew. They tore their garments; stripped to their waists; called for rum; and swore they would die rather than yield!

By this time the consort's reinforcement was rapidly approaching; and, with hurrah after hurrah, the five fresh boats came on in double column. As they drew within shot, each cheer was followed with a fatal volley, under which several more of our combatants were prostrated, while a glancing musket ball lacerated my knee with a painful wound. For

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five minutes we met this onset with cannon, muskets, pistols, and enthusiastic shouts; but in the despairing confusion of the hour, the captain of our long gun rammed home his ball before the powder, so that when the priming burnt, the most reliable of our weapons was silent for ever! At this moment a round shot from the launch dismounted a carronade; our ammunition was wasted; and in this disabled state, the Britons prepared to board our crippled craft. Muskets, bayonets, pistols, swords, and knives for a space kept them at bay, even at short quarters; but the crowded boats tumbled their enraged fighters over our fore-castle like surges from the sea, and, cutlass in hand, the victorious furies swept everything before them. The cry was to 'spare no one!' Down went sailor after sailor, struggling with the frenzied passion of despair. Presently an order went forth to split the gratings and release the slaves. I clung to my post and cheered the battle to the last; but when I heard this fatal command, which, if obeyed, might bury assailant and defender in common ruin, I ordered the remnant to throw down their arms, while I struck the flag and warned the rash Englishman to beware.

The senior officer of the boarding party belonged to the division from the cruiser's consort. As he reached the deck, his clement eye fell sadly on the scene of blood, and he commanded 'quarter' immediately. It was time. The excited boarders from the repulsed boats had mounted our deck brimming with revenge. Everyone that opposed was cut down without mercy; and in another moment, it is likely I would have joined the throng of the departed.

All was over! There was a hushed and panting crowd of victors and vanquished on the bloody deck, when the red ball of the setting sun glared through a crimson haze and filled the motionless sea with liquid fire. For the first time that day I became sensible of personal sufferings. A stifling sensation made me gasp for air as I sat down on the taffrail of my captured schooner, and felt that I was – a prisoner!

My boat, though somewhat riddled with balls, was lowered, and I was commanded to go on board the captor, with my

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papers and servant under the escort of a midshipman. The captain stood at the gangway as I approached, and, seeing my bloody knee, ordered me not to climb the ladder, but to be hoisted on deck and sent below for the immediate care of my wound. It was hardly more than a severe laceration of flesh, yet was quite enough to prevent me from bending my knee, though it did not deny locomotion with a stiff leg.

The dressing over – during which I had quite a pleasant chat with the amiable surgeon – I was summoned to the cabin, where numerous questions were put, all of which I answered frankly and *truly*. Thirteen of my crew were slain, and nearly all the rest wounded. My papers were next inspected, and found to be Spanish. ‘How was it, then,’ exclaimed the commander, ‘that you fought under the Portuguese flag?’

Here was the question I always expected, and for which I had in vain taxed my wit and ingenuity to supply a reasonable excuse! I had nothing to say for the daring violation of nationality; so I resolved to tell the truth boldly about my dispute with the Dane, and my desire to deceive him early in the day, but I cautiously omitted the adroitness with which I had deprived him of his darkies. I confessed that I forgot the flag when I found I had a different foe from the Dane to contend with, and I flattered myself with the hope that, had I repulsed the first unaided onset, I would have been able to escape with the usual sea-breeze.

The captain looked at me in silence a while, and in a sorrowful voice asked if I was aware that my defence under the Portuguese ensign, no matter what tempted its use, could only be construed as an act of *piracy*!

This took place before the surgeon, whose looks and expressions denoted his cordial sympathy with my situation. ‘Yes,’ said Captain —, ‘it is a pity for a sailor who fights as bravely as you have done, in defence of what he considers his property, to be condemned for a combination of mistakes and forgetfulness.’ I was then directed to remain where I was till further orders, while my servant came below with an abundant supply of provisions. The captain went on deck, but the doctor

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remained. Presently, I saw the surgeon and the commander's steward busy over a basket of biscuits, meat and bottles, to the handle of which a cord, several yards in length, was carefully knotted. After this was arranged, the doctor called for a lamp, and unrolling a chart, asked whether I knew the position of the vessel. I replied affirmatively, and, at his request, measured the distance, and noted the course to the nearest land, which was Cape Verga, about thirty-seven miles off.

'Now, if I were in your place, with the prospect of a noose and tight-rope before me, I would make an attempt to know what Cape Verga is made of before twenty-four hours were over my head! And see, my good fellow, how Providence, accident, or fortune favours you! First of all, your own boat *happens* to be towing astern beneath these very cabin windows; secondly, a basket of provisions, water and brandy stands packed on the transom, almost ready to slip into the boat by itself; next, your boy is in the neighbourhood to help you with the skiff; and, finally, it is pitch dark, perfectly calm, and there isn't a sentry to be seen aft the cabin door. Now, good night, my clever fighter, and let me never have the happiness of seeing your face again!'

As he said this, he rose, shaking my hand with the hearty grasp of a sailor, and, as he passed my servant, slipped something into his pocket, which proved to be a couple of sovereigns. Meanwhile, the steward appeared with blankets, which he spread on the locker; and, blowing out the lamp, went on deck with a 'good night.'

It was very still, and unusually dark. There was dead silence in the corvette. Presently, I crawled softly to the stern window, and lying flat on my stomach over the transom, peered out into night. There, in reality, was my boat towing astern by a slack line! As I gazed, some one on deck above me drew in the rope with softest motion, until the skiff lay close under the windows. Patiently, slowly, cautiously – fearing the sound of his fall, and dreading almost the rush of my breath in the profound silence – I lowered my boy into the boat. The basket followed. The negro fastened the boat-hook to the

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cabin window, and on this, lame as I was, I followed the basket. Fortunately, not a splash, a crack, or a footfall disturbed the silence. I looked aloft, and no one was visible on the quarter-deck. A slight jerk brought the boat-rope softly into the water, and I drifted away into the darkness.

## CHAPTER TWENTY



I DRIFTED without a word or motion, and almost without breathing, until the corvette was perfectly obliterated against the hazy horizon. When everything was dark around me, save the guiding stars, I put out the oars and pulled quietly towards the east. At day-dawn I was apparently alone on the ocean.

My appetite had improved so hugely by the night's exercise that my first devotion was to the basket, which I found crammed with bologna sausages, a piece of salt junk, part of a ham, abundance of biscuit, four bottles of water, two of brandy, a pocket compass, a jack-knife, and a large table-cloth or sheet, which the generous doctor had no doubt inserted to serve as a sail.

The humbled slaver and the slave, for the first time in their lives, broke bread from the same basket, and drank from the same bottle! The day before, he was the most servile of menials; to-day he was my equal, and, probably, my superior in certain physical powers, without which I would have perished!

As the sun ascended in the sky, my wound became irritated by exercise, and the inflammation produced a feverish torment in which I groaned as I lay extended in the stern-sheets. By noon a breeze sprang up from the south-west, so that the oars and table-cloth supplied a square sail which wafted us about three miles an hour, while my boy rigged an awning with the blankets and boat-hooks. Thus, half reclining, I steered landward till midnight, when I took in the sail and lay-to on the calm ocean till morning. Next day the breeze again favoured us; and, by sundown, I came up with the coasting canoe of a friendly Mandingo, into which I at once exchanged my quarters, and falling asleep, never stirred till he landed me on the Islands de Loss.

My wound kept me a close and suffering prisoner in a hut on the isles for ten days, during which I despatched a native canoe some thirty-five or forty miles to the Rio Pongo with news of my disaster, and orders for a boat with an equipment of comforts. As my clerk neglected to send a suit of clothes, I was

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obliged to wear the Mandingo habiliments till I reached my factory.

There was rejoicing that night in Kambia among my people, for it is not necessary that a despised slaver should always be a cruel master. I had many a friend among the villagers, both there and at Bangalang, and when the *barker* came from the Isles de Loss with the news of my capture and misery, the settlement had been keenly astir until it was known that Mongo Téodore was safe and sound among his protectors.

I had a deep, refreshing sleep after a glorious bath. Esther stole over the palisades of Bangalang to hear the story from my own lips; and gave me an account of the river gossip during my adventure. The Dane was off after a quarrel with Ormond, who gave him but 100 negroes for his cargo; and a Spanish brig was waiting my arrival. Next morning, bright and early, I was again in my boat, sweeping along towards the *Feliz* from Matanzas, which was anchored within a bowshot of Bangalang. As I rounded a point in sight of her, the Spanish flag was run up, and as I touched the deck, a dozen cheers and a gun gave token of a gallant reception in consequence of my battle with the British, which had been magnified into a perfect Trafalgar.

The *Feliz* was originally consigned to me from Cuba, but in my absence from the river her commander thought it best not to entrust so important a charge to my clerk, and addressed her to Ormond. When my arrival at the Isles de Loss was announced on the river, his engagement with the Mongo had neither been entirely completed nor had any cargo been delivered. Accordingly, the skipper at once taxed his wit for a contrivance by which he could escape the bargain. In Africa such things are sometimes done with ease on small pretexts, so that when I reached Kambia my 140-ton brig was ready for her original consignee.

I found that remittances in money and merchandise covered the value of 350 slaves, whom I quickly ordered from different traders; but when I applied to the Mongo to furnish his share, the gentleman indignantly refused under the affront of his recalled assignment. I tried to pacify and persuade him; yet

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all my efforts were unavailing. Still, the results of this denial did not affect the Mongo personally and alone. When a factor either declines or is unable to procure trade at an African station, the multitude of hangers-on, ragamuffins, servants and villagers around him suffer at least, for a time. They cannot understand and are always disgusted when 'trade is refused.' In this case the people of Bangalang seemed peculiarly dissatisfied with their Mongo's obstinacy. They accused him of indolent disregard of their interests. They charged him with culpable neglect. Several free families departed forthwith to Kambia. His brothers, who were always material sufferers in such cases, upbraided him with arrogant conceit. His women, headed by Fatimah – who supplied herself and her companions with abundant presents out of every fresh cargo – rose in open mutiny, and declared they would run off unless he accepted a share of the contract. Fatimah was the orator of the harem on this as well as on all other occasions of display or grievance, and, of course, she did not spare poor Ormond. Age and drunkenness had made sad inroads on his constitution and looks during the last half-year. His fretful irritability sometimes amounted almost to madness, when thirty female tongues joined in the chorus of their leader's assault. They boldly charged him, singly and in pairs, with every vice and fault that injured matrimony habitually denounces. They boasted of their infidelities, lauded their lovers, and producing their children, with laughs of derision, bade him note the astounding resemblance!

The poor Mongo was sorely beset by these African witches, and summoned his villagers to subdue the revolt; but many of the townsfolk were pets of the girls, so that no one came forth to obey his bidding.

I visited Ormond at his request on the evening of this rebellion, and found him not only smarting with the morning's insult, but so drunk as to be incapable of business. His revengeful eye and nervous movements denoted a troubled mind. When our hands met, I found the Mongo's cold and clammy. I refused wine under a plea of illness; and when, with incoherent

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phrases and distracted gestures, he declared his willingness to retract his refusal and accept a share of the *Felix's* cargo, I thought it best to adjourn the discussion until the following day. Whilst on the point of embarking, I was joined by the faithless servant, whom I bribed to aid me in my affair with the Dane, and was told that Ormond had drugged the wine in anticipation of my arrival. He bade me be wary of the Mongo, who in his presence had threatened my life. That morning, he said, while the women were upbraiding him, my name had been mentioned by one with peculiar favour, when Ormond burst forth with a torrent of passion, and accusing me as the cause of all his troubles, felled the girl to the earth with his fist.

That night I was roused by my watchman to see a stranger, and found Esther at my gate with three of her companions. Their tale was brief. Soon after dark, Ormond entered the harem with loaded pistols, in search of Fatimah and Esther; but the wretch was so stupified by liquor and rage that the women had little trouble to elude his grasp and escape from Bangalang. Hardly had I bestowed them for the night, when another alarm brought the watchman once more to my chamber, with the news of Ormond's death. He had shot himself through the heart!

I was in no mood for sleep after this, and the first streak of dawn found me at Bangalang. There lay the Mongo as he fell. No one disturbed his limbs or approached him till I arrived. He never stirred after the death-wound.

It seems he must have forgotten that the bottle had been specially medicated for me, as it was found nearly drained; but the last thing distinctly known of him by the people was his murderous entrance into the harem to despatch Esther and Fatimah. Soon after this the crack of a pistol was heard in the garden; and there, stretched among the cassava plants, with a loaded pistol grasped in his left and a discharged one at a short distance from his right hand, lay Jack Ormond, the mulatto! His left breast was pierced by a ball, the wad of which still clung to the bloody orifice.

Bad as this man was, I could not avoid a sigh for his death.

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He had been my first friend in Africa, and I had forfeited his regard through no fault of mine. Besides this, there are so few on the coast of Africa in these lonely settlements among the mangrove swamps who have tasted European civilization, and can converse like human beings, that the loss even of the worst is a dire calamity. Ormond and myself had held each other for a long time at a wary distance; yet business forced us together now and then, and during the truce, we had many a pleasant chat and joyous hour that would henceforth be lost for ever.

It is customary in this part of Africa to make the burial of a Mongo the occasion of a festival, when all the neighbouring chiefs and relations send gifts of food and beverage for the orgies of death. Messengers had been despatched for Ormond's brothers and kinsfolk, so that the native ceremony of interment was postponed till the third day; and, in the interval, I was desired to make all the preparations in a style befitting the suicide's station. Accordingly, I issued the needful orders; directed a deep grave to be dug under a noble cotton-wood tree, aloof from the village; gave the body in charge to women, who were to watch it until burial, with cries of sorrow, and then retired to Kambia.

On the day of obsequies I came back. At noon a salute was fired by the guns of the village, which was answered by minute guns from the *Felix* and my factory. Seldom have I heard a sadder sound than the boom of those cannons through the silent forest and over the waveless water.

Presently, all the neighbouring chiefs, princes and kings came in with their retainers, when the body was brought out into the shade of a grove, so that all might behold it. Then the procession took up its line of march, while the thirty wives of the Mongo followed the coffin, clad in rags, their heads shaven, their bodies lacerated with burning iron, and filling the air with yells and shrieks until the senseless clay was laid in the grave.

I could find no English prayer-book or Bible in the village, from which I might read the service of his church over Ormond's remains, but I had never forgotten the *Ave Maria* and *Pater*

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*Noster* I learned when an infant, and, while I recited them devoutly over the self-murderer, I could not help thinking they were even more than sufficient for the savage surroundings.

The brief prayer could not be too brief for the impatient crowd. In a twinkling, every foot rushed back to the dwelling in Bangalang. The grove was alive with revelry. Stakes and racks reeked with roasting bullocks. Here and there, kettles steamed with boiling rice. Demijohn after demijohn of *rum* was served out. Very soon a sham battle was proposed, and parties were formed. The divisions took their grounds; and, presently, the scouts appeared, crawling like reptiles on the earth till they ascertained each other's position, when the armies sallied forth with guns, bows, arrows, or lances, and, after firing, shrieking and shouting till they were deaf, retired with captives, and the war was done. Then came a reinforcement of rum, and then a dance till rum and humanity gave out together, and reeled to the earth in drunken sleep!

## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

SLAVES dropped in slowly at Kambia and Bangalang, though I still had half the cargo of the *Feliz* to make up. Time was precious, and there was no foreigner on the river to aid me. In this strait, I resolved on a foray among the natives on my own account; and equipping a couple of my largest canoes with an ample armament, as well as a substantial store of provisions and merchandise, I departed for the Matacan river, a short stream, unsuitable for vessels of considerable draft. I was prepared for the purchase of fifty slaves.

I reached my destination without risk or adventure. After a proper delay, the king called a regular 'palaver' of his chiefs and headmen, before whom I stated my *dantica* and announced the terms. Very soon several young folks were brought for sale, who, I am sure, never dreamed at rising from last night's sleep, that they were destined for Cuban slavery! My merchandise revived the memory of peccadilloes that had been long forgotten and sentences that were forgiven. Jealous husbands, when they tasted my rum, suddenly remembered their wives' infidelities, and sold their better halves for more of the oblivious fluid. In truth I was exalted into a magician, unroofing the village, and baring its crime and wickedness to the eye of *justice*. Law became profitable, and virtue had never reached so high a price! Before night the town was in a turmoil, for every man cudgelled his brain for an excuse to kidnap his neighbour, so as to share my commerce. As the village was too small to supply the entire gang of fifty, I had recourse to the neighbouring settlements, where my 'barkers,' or agents, did their work in a masterly manner. Traps were adroitly baited with goods to lead the unwary into temptation, when the unconscious pilferer was caught by his ambushed foe, and an hour served to hurry him to the beach as a slave for ever. In fact, five days were sufficient to stamp my image permanently on the Matacan settlements, and to associate my memory with anything but blessings in at least fifty of their families.

The *Esperanza's* capture made it absolutely necessary that I

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should visit Cuba, so that, when the *Felix* was preparing to depart, I began to put my factory and affairs in such order as would enable me to embark in her and leave me master of myself for a considerable time. I may as well record the fact here that the unlucky *Esperanza* was sent to Sierra Leone, where she was, of course, condemned as a slaver, while the officers and crew were despatched by order of the Admiralty, in irons, to Lisbon, where a tribunal condemned them to the galleys for five years. I understand they were subsequently released by the clemency of Don Pedro de Braganza when he arrived from Brazil.

Everything was ready for our departure. My rice was stored and about to be sent on board, when, about three o'clock in the morning of the 25th of May 1828, the voice of my servant roused me to fly for life! I sprang from the cot to the door, where the flickering of a bright flame, reflected through the thick, misty air, gave token of fire. The roof of my house was in a blaze, and 150 kegs of powder were close at hand beneath a thatch! They could not be removed, and a single spark from the frail and tinder-like materials might send the whole in an instant to the skies.

A rapid discharge from a double-barrelled gun brought my people to the spot with alacrity, and enabled me to rescue the 220 slaves stowed in the barracoon and march them to a neighbouring wood where they would be secure under a guard. In my haste to rescue the slaves I forgot to warn my body-servant of his peril from the powder. The faithful boy made several trips to the dwelling to save my personal effects, and after removing everything he had strength to carry, returned to unchain the bloodhound that always slept beside my couch in Africa. But the dog was as ignorant of his danger as the youth. *He knew no friend but myself*, and tearing the hand that was exposed to save him, he forced his rescuer to fly. And well was it he did so. Within a minute, a tremendous blast shook the earth. Everything was swept as by the breath of a whirlwind. My terrified boy, bleeding at nose and ears, was rescued from the ruins of a shallow well in which he fortunately fell. The bamboo sheds, barracoons and hovels – the *adobe* dwelling

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and the comfortable garden – could all spring up again in a short time, as if by enchantment, but my rich stuffs, my cottons, my provisions, my arms, my ammunition, my capital, were dust.

In a few hours, friends crowded round me, according to African custom, with proffered services to rebuild my establishment; but the heaviest loss I experienced was that of the rice designed for the voyage, which I could not replace in consequence of the destruction of my merchandise. In my difficulty, I was finally obliged to swap some of my 220 negroes for the desired commodity, which enabled me to despatch the *Feliz*, though I was, of course, obliged to abandon the voyage in her.

My mind was greatly exercised for some time in endeavours to discover the origin of this conflagration. The blaze was first observed at the top of one of the gable ends, which satisfied Ali-Ninpha as well as myself that it was the work of a malicious incendiary. We adopted a variety of methods to trace or trap the scoundrel, but our efforts were fruitless, until a strange negro exhibited one of my double-barrelled guns for sale at a neighbouring village, whose chief happened to recognize it. When the seller was questioned about his possession of the weapon, he alleged that it was purchased from inland negroes in a distant town. His replies were so unsatisfactory to the inquisitive chief that he arrested the suspected felon and sent him to Kambia.

I had but little remorse in adopting any means in my power to extort a confession from the negro. I was soon in possession of the thief, and had little difficulty in securing his execution on the ruins he had made. Before we launched him into eternity, I obtained his confession after an obstinate resistance, and found with considerable pain that a brother of Ormond, the suicide, was a principal mover in the affair. The last words of the Mongo had been reported to this fellow as an injunction of revenge against me, and he very soon learned from personal experience that Kambia was a serious rival, if not antagonist, to Bangalang. His African simplicity made him believe that the 'red cock' on my roof-tree would expel me from the river. I was not in a position to pay him back at the moment, yet I

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made a vow to give the new Mongo a free passage in irons to Cuba before many moons. But this, like other rash promises, I never kept.

Sad as was the wreck of my property, the conflagration was fraught with a misfortune that affected my heart far more deeply than the loss of merchandise. Ever since the day of my landing at Ormond's factory, a gentle form had flitted like a fairy among my fortunes, and always as the minister of kindness and hope. Skilled in the ways of her double blood, she was my discreet counsellor in many a peril; and, tender as a well-bred dame of civilized lands, she was ever disposed to promote my happiness by disinterested offices. But, when we came to number the survivors of the ruin, Esther was nowhere to be found.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO



OF course, I had very little beside my domestics to leave in charge of any one at Kambia, and entrusting them to the care of Ali-Ninpha, I went in my launch to Sierra Leone, where I purchased a schooner that had been condemned by the Mixed Commission.

In 1829, vessels were publicly sold, and, with very little trouble, equipped for the coast of Africa. The captures in that region were somewhat like playing a hand – taking the tricks, reshuffling the same cards, and dealing again to take more tricks! Accordingly, I fitted the schooner to receive a cargo of negroes immediately on quitting port. My crew was made up of men from all nations, captured in prizes; but I guardedly selected my officers from Spaniards exclusively.

We were slowly wafting along the sea, a day or two out of the British colony, when the mate fell into chat with a clever lad, who was hanging lazily over the helm. They spoke of voyages and mishaps, and this led the sailor to declare his recent escape from a vessel, then in the Rio Nunez, whose mate had poisoned the commander to get possession of the craft. She had been fitted, he said, at St. Thomas with the feigned design of coasting; but, when she sailed for Africa, her register was sent back to the island in a boat to serve some other vessel, while she ventured to the continent *without* papers.

I have cause to believe that the slave trade was rarely conducted upon the honourable principles between man and man, which, of course, are the only security betwixt owners, commanders and consignees whose commerce is exclusively contraband. There were men, it is true, engaged in it with whom the 'point of honour' was more omnipotent than the dread of law in regular trade. But innumerable cases have occurred in which the spendthrifts who appropriated their owners' property on the coast of Africa availed themselves of such superior force as they happened to control, in order to escape detection or assure a favourable reception in the West Indies. In fact, the slaver sometimes ripened into something very like a pirate!

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In 1828 and 1829, severe engagements took place between Spanish slavers and this class of contrabandists. Spaniards would assail Portuguese when the occasion was tempting and propitious. Many a vessel has been fitted in Cuba for these adventures and returned to port with a living cargo, purchased by cannon-balls and boarding-pikes exclusively.

Now, I was fond of excitement; my craft was sadly in want of a cargo; and, as the mate narrated the helmsman's story, the idea naturally got control of my brain that I was destined to become the *avenger* of the poisoned captain; for had not the sailor apprised us that his vessel was half full of negroes!

As we drifted slowly by the mouth of my old river, I slipped over the bar, and, while I fitted the schooner with a splendid nine-pounder amidships, I despatched a spy to the Rio Nunez to report the facts about the poisoning as well as the armament of the unregistered slaver. In ten days the runner verified the tale. She was still in the stream, with 185 human beings in her hold, but would soon be off with an entire cargo of 225.

The time was extraordinarily propitious. Everything favoured my enterprise. The number of slaves would exactly fit my schooner. Such a windfall could not be neglected; and, on the fourth day, I was entering the Rio Nunez under the Portuguese flag, which I unfurled by virtue of a pass from Sierra Leone to the Cape de Verd Islands.

I cannot tell whether my spy had been faithless, but when I reached Furcaria, I perceived that my game had taken wing from her anchorage. Here was a sad disappointment. The schooner drew too much water to allow a further ascent, and, moreover, I was unacquainted with the river.

As it was important that I should keep aloof from strangers, I anchored in a quiet spot, and seizing the first canoe that passed, learned, for a small reward, that the object of my search was hidden in a bend of the river at the king's town of Kakundy, which I could not reach without the pilotage of a certain mulatto, who was alone fit for the enterprise.

I knew this half-breed as soon as his person was described, but I had little hope of securing his services, either by fair

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means or promised recompense. He owed me five slaves for dealings that took place between us at Kambia, and had always refused so strenuously to pay that I felt sure he would be off to the woods as soon as he knew my presence on the river. Accordingly, I kept my canoeman on the schooner by an abundant supply of 'bitters,' and at midnight landed half a dozen, who proceeded to the mulatto's cabin, where he was seized. The terror of this ruffian was indescribable when he found himself in my presence – a captive, as he supposed, for the debt. But I soon relieved him, and offered a liberal reward for his prompt, secret and safe pilotage to Kakundy. The mulatto was willing, but the stream was too shallow for my keel.

The two boats were quickly manned, armed and supplied with lanterns; and, with muffled oars, guided by our pilot – whose skull was kept constantly under the lee of my pistol – we fell like vampires on our prey in the darkness. With a wild hurrah and a blaze of our pistols in the air, we leaped on board, driving every soul under hatches without striking a blow! Sentries were placed at the cabin door, forecastle and hatchway. The cable was slipped, my launch took her in tow, the pilot and myself took charge of the helm, and, before daylight, the prize was alongside my schooner, transshipping 197 of her slaves, with their necessary supplies.

Great was the surprise of the captured crew when they saw their fate, and great was the agony of the poisoner when he returned next morning to the vacant anchorage after a night of debauch with the King of Kakundy. First of all he imagined we were regular cruisers, and that the captain's death was about to be avenged. But when it was discovered that they had fallen into the grasp of friendly slavers, five of his seamen abandoned their craft and shipped with me.

Three canoes came blustering down the stream, filled with negroes and headed by his majesty. I did not wait for a salutation, but, giving the warriors a dose of bellicose grape, tripped my anchor, sheeted home my sails and was off.

It was a sweltering July, and the 'rainy season' proved its tremendous power by almost incessant deluges. In the breath-

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less calms that held me spell-bound on the coast, the rain came down in such torrents that I often thought the solid water would bury and submerge our schooner. Now and then a south-wester and the current would fan and drift us along; yet the tenth day found us rolling from side to side in the longitude of the Cape de Verds.

Day broke with one of its customary squalls and showers. As the cloud lifted, my look-out from the cross-trees announced a sail under our lee. It was invisible from deck, in the folds of the retreating rain, but in the dead calm that followed the distant whistle of a boatswain was distinctly audible. Before I could deliberate all my doubts were solved by a shot in our mainsail and the crack of a cannon. There could be no question that the unwelcome visitor was a man-of-war.

It was fortunate that the breeze sprang up after the lull and enabled us to carry everything that could be crowded on our spars. The slaves were shifted from side to side – forward or aft – to aid our sailing. Headstays were slackened, wedges knocked off the masts, and every incumbrance cast from the decks into the sea. Now and then a fruitless shot from his bow-chasers reminded the fugitive that the foe was still on his scent. At last the cruiser got the range of his guns so perfectly, that a well-aimed ball ripped away our rail and tore a dangerous splinter from the foremast, three feet from deck. It was now perilous to carry a press of sail on the same tack with the weakened spar, whereupon I put the schooner about, and, to my delight, found we ranged ahead a knot faster on this course than the former. The enemy ‘went about’ as quickly as we did, but her balls soon fell short of us, and, before noon, we had crawled so nimbly to windward that her top-gallants alone were visible above the horizon.

Our voyage was unchecked by any occurrence worthy of recollection, save the loss of the mate in a dark and stormy night, until we approached the Antilles. Here, where everything on a slaver assumes the guise of pleasure and relief, I remarked not only the sullenness of my crew, but a disposition to disobey

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or neglect. The second mate – shipped in the Rio Nunez, and who replaced my lost officer – was noticed occasionally in close intercourse with the watch, while his deportment indicated dissatisfaction, if not mutiny.

A slaver's life on shore, as well as at sea, makes him wary when another would not be even apprehensive. The sight of land is commonly the signal for merriment, for a well-behaved cargo is invariably released from shackles and allowed free intercourse between the sexes during daytime on deck. Water tanks are thrown open for unrestricted use. The 'cat' is cast into the sea. Strict discipline is relaxed. The day of danger or revolt is considered over, and the captain enjoys a new and refreshing life till the hour of landing. Sailors, with a proverbial generosity, share their biscuits and clothing with the blacks. The women, who are generally without garments, appear in costume from the wardrobes of tars, petty officers, mates and even captains. Sheets, table-cloths and spare sails are torn to pieces for raiment, while shoes, boots, caps, oil-cloths and monkey-jackets contribute to the gay masquerade of the 'emigrants.'

It was my sincere hope that the first glimpse of the Antilles would have converted my schooner into a theatre for such a display; but the moodiness of my companions was so manifest that I thought it best to meet rebellion half way, by breaking the suspected officer and sending him forward, at the same time that I threw his 'dog-house' overboard.<sup>1</sup>

I was now without a reliable officer, and was obliged to call two of the youngest sailors to my assistance in navigating the schooner. I knew the cook and steward – both of whom messed aft – to be trustworthy; so that, with four men at my back and the blacks below, I felt competent to control my vessel. From that moment I suffered no one to approach the quarter-deck nearer than the mainmast.

It was a sweet afternoon when we were floating along the

<sup>1</sup> The forecabin and cabin of a slaver are given up to the living freight, while officers sleep on deck in kennels, technically known as "dog-houses."

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shores of Porto Rico, tracking our course upon the chart. Suddenly, one of my new assistants approached with the sociability common among Spaniards, and, in a quiet tone, asked whether I would take a *cigarillo*. As I never smoked, I rejected the offer with thanks, when the youth immediately dropped the twisted paper on my lap. In an instant, I perceived that the *cigarillo* was, in fact, a *billet* rolled to resemble one. I put it in my mouth, and walked aft until I could throw myself on the deck, with my head over the stern, so as to open the paper unseen. It disclosed the organization of a mutiny under the lead of the broken mate. Our arrival in sight of St. Domingo was to be the signal of its rupture, and for my immediate landing on the island. Six of the crew were implicated with the villain, and the boatswain, who was ill in the slave-hospital, was to share my fate.

My resolution was promptly made. In a few minutes I had cast a hasty glance into the arm-chest, and seen that our weapons were in order. Then, mustering ten of the stoutest and cleverest of my negroes on the quarter-deck, I took the liberty to invent a little strategic fib, and told them, in the Soosoo dialect, that there were bad men on board who wanted to run the schooner ashore among rocks and drown the slaves while below. At the same time I gave each a cutlass from the arm-chest, and supplying my trusty whites with a couple of pistols and a knife apiece, without saying a word I seized the ringleader and his colleagues! Irons and double-irons secured the party to the mainmast or deck, while a drum-head court martial, composed of the officers and presided over by myself, arraigned and tried the scoundrels in much less time than regular boards ordinarily spend in such investigations. During the inquiry we ascertained beyond doubt that the death of the mate was due to false play. He had been wilfully murdered as a preliminary to the assault on me, for his colossal stature and powerful muscles would have made him a dangerous adversary in the seizure of the craft.

There was, perhaps, a touch of the old-fashioned Inquisition in the mode of our judicial researches concerning this projected mutiny. Whenever the culprit manifested reluctance or hesitation

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his memory was stimulated by a 'cat.' Accordingly, at the end of the trial, the mutineers were already pretty well punished; so that we sentenced the six accomplices to receive an additional flagellation and continue ironed till we reached Cuba. But the fate of the ringleader was not decided so easily. Some were in favour of dropping him overboard, as he had done with the mate; others proposed to set him adrift on a raft, ballasted with chains; but I considered both these punishments too cruel, notwithstanding his treachery, and kept his head beneath the pistol of a sentry till I landed him in shackles on Turtle Island with three days' food and abundance of water.

After all these adventures I was very near losing the schooner before I got to land by one of the perils of the sea, for which I blame myself that I was not better prepared.

It was the afternoon of a fine day. For some time I had noticed on the horizon a low bank of white cloud, which rapidly spread itself over the sky and water, surrounding us with an impenetrable fog. I apprehended danger; yet, before I could make the schooner snug to meet the squall, a blast – as sudden and loud as a thunderbolt – prostrated her nearly on her beam. The shock was so violent and unforeseen that the unrestrained slaves, who were enjoying the fine weather on deck, rolled to leeward till they floundered in the sea that inundated the scuppers. There was no power in the tiller to 'keep her away' before the blast, for the rudder was almost out of water; but, fortunately, our mainsail burst in shreds from the bolt-ropes, and, relieving us from its pressure, allowed the schooner to right under control of the helm. The West Indian squall abandoned us as rapidly as it assailed, and I was happy to find that our entire loss did not exceed two slave children who had been carelessly suffered to sit on the rail.

My voyage was an *impromptu* speculation, without papers, manifest, register, consignees or destination. It became necessary, therefore, that I should exercise a very unusual degree of circumspection, not only in landing my cargo, but in selecting a spot from which I might communicate with proper

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persons. I had never been in Cuba, save on the occasion already described, nor were my business transactions extended beyond the Regla association, by which I was originally sent to Africa.

The day after the 'white squall' I found our schooner drifting with a leading breeze along the southern coast of Cuba, and as the time seemed favourable I thought I might land my cargo in a secluded cove about nine miles east of Sant' Iago. If I had been consigned to the spot I could not have been more fortunate in my reception. Some sixty yards from the landing I found the comfortable home of a *ranchero* who proffered the hospitality usual in such cases, and devoted a spacious barn to the reception of my slaves.

I learned that a cargo had recently been 'run' in the neighbourhood of Matanzas, and that its disposal was most successfully managed by a Señor — from Catalonia. It flashed through my mind to trust this man without further inquiry, and I confess that my decision was based exclusively upon his nationality. I am partial to the Catalans.

Accordingly, I presented myself at the counting-room of my future consignee in due time, and 'made a clean breast' of the whole transaction, disclosing the destitute state of my vessel. In a very short period, his Excellency the Captain-General was made aware of my arrival and furnished a list of 'the Africans,' by which name the Bosal slaves are commonly known in Cuba. Nor was the captain of the port neglected. A convenient blank page of his register was inscribed with the name of my vessel as having sailed from the port six months before, and this was backed by a register and muster-roll in order to secure my unquestionable entry into a harbour.

Before nightfall everything was in order with Spanish despatch when stimulated either by doubloons or the smell of African blood; and twenty-four hours afterwards, I was again at the landing with a suit of clothes and blanket for each of my 'domestics.' The schooner was immediately put in charge of a clever pilot, who undertook the formal duty and *name* of her commander, in order to elude the vigilance of all the minor

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officials whose conscience had not been lulled by the golden anodyne.

In the meanwhile every attention had been given to the slaves by my hospitable *ranchero*. The 'head-money' once paid, nobody – civil, military, foreign, or Spanish – dared interfere with them. Forty-eight hours of rest, ablution, exercise and feeding served to recruit the gang and steady their gait when the march towards Sant' Iago began.

The brokers made very little delay in finding purchasers at retail for the entire venture. The returns were, of course, in cash; and so well did the enterprise turn out, that I forgot the rebellion of our mutineers, and allowed them to share my bounty with the rest of the crew. In fact, so pleased was I with the result on inspecting the balance sheet, that I resolved to divert myself with Cuban country life for a month at least.

But while I was making ready for this delightful repose, a slight breeze passed over the calmness of my mirror. I had given, perhaps imprudently, but certainly with generous motives, a double pay to my men in recompense of their perilous service on the Rio Nunez. With the usual recklessness of their craft, they lounged about Havana, boasting of their success, while a Frenchman of the party – who had been swindled of his wages at cards – appealed to his Consul for relief. By dint of cross questions the official extracted the tale of our voyage from his countryman, and took advantage of the fellow's destitution to make him a witness against a certain Don Téodore Canot, who was alleged to be a native of France! Besides this, the punishment of my mate was exaggerated by the recreant Frenchman into a most unjustifiable as well as cruel act.

Of course the story was promptly detailed to the Captain-General, who issued an order for my arrest. But I was too wary and flush to be caught so easily. No person bearing my name could be found in the island; and as the schooner had entered port with Spanish papers, Spanish crew, and was regularly sold, it became manifest to the stupefied Consul that the sailor's 'yarn' was an entire fabrication. That night a convenient press-

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gang, in want of recruits for the royal marine, seized the braggadocio crew, and as there were no witnesses to corroborate the Consul's complaint it was forthwith dismissed.

Things are managed very cleverly in Havana – when you know how!

## CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

BEFORE I went to sea again, I took a long holiday with full pockets, among my old friends at Regla and Havana. I thought it possible that a residence in Cuba for a season, aloof from traders and their transactions, might wean me from Africa; but three months had hardly elapsed before I found myself sailing out of the harbour of St. Jago de Cuba to take, in Jamaica, a cargo of merchandise for the coast, and then to return and refit for slaves in Cuba.

My voyage began with a gale, which for three days swept us along on a tolerably good course, but on the night of the third, after snapping my mainmast on a lee shore, I was forced to beach the schooner in order to save our lives and cargo from destruction. Fortunately, we effected our landing with complete success, and at dawn I found my gallant little craft a total wreck on an uninhabited key. A large tent or pavilion was quickly built from our sails, sweeps and remaining spars, beneath which everything valuable and undamaged was stored before nightfall. Parties were sent forth to reconnoitre, while our remaining foremast was unshipped and planted on the highest part of the sandbank with a signal of distress. The scouts returned without consolation. Nothing had been seen except a large dog, whose neck was encircled with a collar; but as he could not be made to approach by kindness I forbade his execution. Neither smoke nor tobacco freed us of the cloudy swarms of mosquitoes that filled the air after sunset, and so violent was the irritation of their innumerable stings that a delicate boy among the crew became utterly insane, and was not restored till long after his return to Cuba.

Vessel after vessel passed the reef, but none took notice of our signal. At last, on the tenth day of our imprisonment, a couple of small schooners fanned their way in a nonchalant manner towards our island, and knowing that we were quite at their mercy, refused our rescue unless we assented to the most extravagant terms of compensation. After a good deal of chaffering, it was agreed that the salvors should land us and our

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effects at Nassau, New Providence, where the average should be determined by the lawful tribunal. The voyage was soon accomplished, and our liberators obtained a judicial award of seventy per cent. for their extraordinary trouble.

The wreck and the wreckers made so formidable an inroad upon my finances that I was very happy when I reached Cuba once more, to accept the berth of sailing-master in a slave brig, which was fitting out at St. Thomas's under an experienced Frenchman.

My new craft, the *San Pablo*, was a trim Brazil-built brig of rather more than 300 tons. Her hold contained sixteen twenty-four carronades, while her magazine was stocked with abundance of ammunition, and her keelson lined, fore and aft, with round shot and grape. Captain — received me with much affability, and seemed charmed when I told him that I conversed fluently not only in French but in English.

I had hardly arrived and begun to take the dimensions of my new equipage, when a report ran through the harbour that a Danish cruiser was about to touch at the island. Of course, everything was instantly afloat, and in a bustle to be off. Stores and provisions were tumbled in pell-mell, tanks were filled with water during the night; and, before dawn, fifty-five ragamuffins of all castes, colours, and countries were shipped as crew. By 'six bells,' with a coasting flag at our peak, we were two miles at sea with our main-topsail aback, receiving six kegs of specie and several chests of clothing from a lugger.

When we were fairly on 'blue water,' I discovered that our voyage, though a slaver's, was not of an ordinary character. On the second day, the mariners were provided with two sets of uniform, to be worn on Sundays or when called to quarters. Gold-laced caps, blue coats with anchor buttons, single epaulettes and side-arms were distributed to the officers, while a brief address from the captain on the quarter-deck apprised all hands that, if the enterprise resulted well, a *bounty* of \$100 would be paid to each adventurer.

That night our skipper took me into council and developed his plan, which was to load in a port in the Mozambique

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channel. To effect his purpose with more security he had provided the brig with an armament sufficient to repel a man-of-war of equal size (a fancy I never gave way to); and on all occasions, except in presence of a French cruiser, he intended to hoist the Bourbon lilies, wear the Bourbon uniform, and conduct the vessel in every way as if she belonged to the royal navy. Nor were the officers to be less favoured than the sailors in regard to double salary, certificates of which were handed to me for myself and my two subordinates. A memorandum book was then supplied, containing minute instructions for each day of the ensuing week, and I was specially charged, as second in command, to be cautiously punctual in all my duties and severely just towards my inferiors.

I took some pride in acquitting myself creditably in this new military phase of a slaver's life. Very few days sufficed to put the rigging and sails in perfect condition, to mount my sixteen guns, to drill the men with small arms as well as artillery, and, by paint and sea-craft, to disguise the *Saint Paul* as a very respectable cruiser.

In twenty-seven days we touched at the Cape de Verds for provisions, and shaped our way southward without speaking a single vessel of the multitude we met until off the Cape of Good Hope we encountered a stranger who was evidently bent upon being sociable. Nevertheless, our inhospitable spirit forced us to hold our course unswervingly, till from peak and main we saw the white flag and pennant of France unfurled to the wind.

Our drum immediately beat to quarters, while the flag chest was brought on deck. Presently, the French *transport* demanded our private signal; which out of our ample supply was promptly answered, and the royal ensign of Portugal set at our peak.

As we approached the Frenchman everything was made ready for all hazards – our guns were double-shotted, our matches lighted, our small arms distributed. The moment we came within hail, our captain – who claimed precedence of the lieutenant of a transport – spoke the Frenchman; and, for a while, carried on quite an amiable chat in Portuguese. At last

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the stranger requested leave to send his boat aboard with letters for the Isle of France; to which we consented with the greatest pleasure, though our captain thought it fair to inform him that we dared not prudently invite his officers on deck, inasmuch as there were 'several cases of smallpox among our crew, contracted, in all likelihood, at Angola.'

The discharge of an unexpected broadside could not have struck our visitor with more dismay or horror. The words were hardly spoken when her decks were in a bustle, her yards braced sharply to the wind, and her prow boiling through the sea, without so much as a '*bon voyage!*'

Ten days after this ruse we anchored at Quillimane, among a lot of Portuguese and Brazilian slavers, whose sails were either clewed up or unbent as if for a long delay. We fired a salute of twenty guns and ran up the French flag. The salvo was quickly answered, while our captain, in the full uniform of a naval commander, paid his respects to the Governor. Meantime orders were given me to remain carefully in charge of the ship; to avoid all intercourse with others; to go through the complete routine and show of a man-of-war; to strike the yards, haul down signal, and fire a gun at sunset; but especially to get under way and meet the captain at a small beach off the port the instant I saw a certain flag flying from the fort.

I have rarely seen matters conducted more skilfully. Next morning early, the Governor's boat was sent for the specie; the fourth day disclosed the signal that called us to the beach; the fifth, sixth, and seventh supplied us with 800 negroes; and, on the ninth, we were under way for our destination.

The success of this enterprise was more remarkable because fourteen vessels, waiting cargoes, were at anchor when we arrived, some of which had been detained in port over fifteen months. To such a pitch had their impatience risen, that the masters made common cause against all newcomers, and agreed that each vessel should take its turn for supply according to date of arrival. But the astuteness of my veteran circumvented all these plans. His anchorage and non-intercourse as a *French man-of-war* lulled every suspicion or intrigue against him, and

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he adroitly took advantage of his kegs of specie to win the heart of the authorities and factors who supplied the slaves.

Our captain returned in high spirits to his vessel; but we hardly reached the open sea before he was prostrated with an ague which refused to yield to ordinary remedies, and finally ripened into fever that deprived him of reason. Other dangers thickened around us. We had been several days off the Cape of Good Hope, buffeting a series of adverse gales, when word was brought me after a night of weary watching, that several slaves were ill of smallpox. Of all calamities that occur in the voyage of a slaver, this is the most dreaded and unmanageable. The news appalled me. Impetuous with anxiety I rushed to the captain, and regardless of fever or insanity, disclosed the dreadful fact. He stared at me for a minute as if in doubt; then opening his bureau and pointing to a long coil of combustible material, said that it communicated through the decks with the powder magazine, and ordered me to – ‘blow up the brig!’

I lost no time in securing both the dangerous implement and its perilous owner, while I called the officers into the cabin for inquiry and consultation as to our desperate state.

The gale had lasted nine days without intermission, and during all this time with so much violence that it was impossible to take off the gratings, release the slaves, purify the decks, or rig the windsails. When the first lull occurred, a thorough inspection of the 800 was made, and a death announced. As life had departed during the tempest, a careful inspection of the body was made, and it was this that first disclosed the pestilence in our midst. The corpse was silently thrown into the sea, and the malady kept secret from crew and negroes.

When breakfast was over on that fatal morning I determined to visit the slave deck myself, and ordering an abundant supply of lanterns descended to the cavern, which still reeked horribly with human vapour, even after ventilation. Here, I found nine of the negroes infected by the disease. We took counsel as to the use of laudanum in ridding ourselves speedily of the sufferers – a remedy that is seldom and secretly used in desperate cases to preserve the living from contagion. But it

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was quickly resolved that it had already gone too far, when nine were prostrated, to save the rest by depriving them of life. Accordingly, these wretched beings were at once sent to the fore-castle as a hospital, and given in charge to the vaccinated or inoculated as nurses. The hold was then ventilated and limed; yet, before the gale abated, our sick list was increased to thirty. The hospital could hold no more. Twelve of the sailors took the infection, and fifteen corpses had been cast in the sea!

All reserve was now at an end. Body after body fed the deep, and still the gale held on. At last, when the wind and waves had lulled so much as to allow the grating to be removed from our hatches, our consternation knew no bounds when we found that nearly all the slaves were dead or dying with the distemper. Twelve of the stoutest survivors were ordered to drag out the dead from among the ill, and though they were constantly drenched with rum to brutalize them, still we were forced to aid the gang by reckless volunteers from our crew, who, arming their hands with tarred mittens, flung the fœtid masses of putrefaction into the sea!

.At length death was satisfied, but not until the 800 beings we had shipped in high health had dwindled to 497 skeletons!

## CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

THE *San Pablo* might have been considered entitled to a 'clean bill of health' by the time she reached the Equator. The dead left space, food and water for the living, and very little restraint was imposed on the squalid remnant. None were shackled after the outbreak of the fatal plague, so that in a short time the survivors began to fatten for the market to which they were hastening. But such was not the fate of our captain. The fever and delirium had long left him, yet a dysenteric tendency – the result of a former malady – suddenly supervened, and the worthy gentleman rapidly declined. His nerves gave way so thoroughly, that from fanciful weakness he lapsed into helpless hypochondria. One of his pet ideas was that a copious dose of calomel would ensure his restoration to perfect health. Unfortunately, however, during the prevalence of the plague, our medicine chest had one day been accidentally left exposed, and our mercury was abstracted. Still there was no calming him with the assurance that his *nostrum* could not be had.

In this dilemma I ordered a bright look-out to be kept for merchantmen from whom I hoped to obtain the desirable drug. At last a sail was reported two points under our lee, and as her canvas was both patched and dark, I considered her a harmless Briton who might be approached with impunity.

It proved to be a brig from Belfast, in Ireland; but when I overhauled the skipper and desired him to send a boat on board, he declined the invitation and kept his course. A second and third command shared the same fate. I was somewhat nettled by this disregard of my flag, pennant and starboard epaulette, and ordering the brig to be run alongside, I made her fast to the recusant, and boarded with ten men.

Our reception was, of course, not very amicable, though no show of resistance was made by officers or crew. I informed the captain that my object in stopping him was entirely one of mercy, and repeated the request I had previously made through the speaking-trumpet. Still, the stubborn Scotchman persisted in denying the medicine, though I offered him payment in

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silver or gold. Thereupon, I commanded the mate to produce his log-book, and, under my dictation, to note the visit of the *San Pablo*, my request and its churlish denial. This being done to my satisfaction, I ordered two of my hands to search for the medicine chest, which turned out to be a sorry receptacle of stale drugs, though fortunately containing an abundance of calomel. I did not parley about appropriating a third of the mineral, for which I counted five silver dollars on the cabin table. But the metal was no sooner exhibited than my Scotchman refused it with disdain. I handed it, however, to the mate, and exacted a receipt, which was noted in the log-book.

I resolved 'to heap coals of fire on the head' of the ingrate; and, before I cast off our lashings, threw on his deck a dozen yams, a bag of frijoles, a barrel of pork, a couple of sacks of white Spanish biscuits, – and, with a cheer, bade him adieu.

But there was no balm in calomel for the captain. He declined day by day; yet the energy of his hard nature kept him alive when other men would have sunk, and enabled him to command even from his sick-bed.

It was always our Sabbath service to drum the men to quarters and exercise them with cannons and small arms. One Sunday, after the routine was over, the dying man desired to inspect his crew, and was carried to the quarter-deck on a mattress. Each sailor marched in front of him and was allowed to take his hand; after which he called them around in a body, and announced his apprehension that death would claim him before our destination was reached. Then, without previously apprising us of his design, he proceeded to make a verbal testament, and enjoined it upon all as a duty to his memory to obey implicitly. If the *San Pablo* arrived safely in port, he desired that every officer and mariner should be paid the promised bounty, and that the proceeds of cargo should be sent to his family in Nantes. But, if it happened that we were attacked by a cruiser, and the brig was saved by the risk and valour of a defence, then he directed that one half the voyage's avails should be shared between officers and crew, while one quarter was sent to his friends in France, and the other given to me.

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His sailing-master and Cuban consignees were to be the executors of this salt-water document.

We were now well advanced north-westwardly on our voyage, and in every cloud could see a promise of the continuing trade-wind, which was shortly to end a luckless voyage. From deck to royal, from flying-jib to ring-tail, every stitch of canvas that would draw was packed and crowded on the brig. Vessels were daily seen in numbers, but none appeared suspicious till we got far to the westward, when my glass detected a cruising schooner, jogging along under easy sail. I ordered the helmsman to keep his course; and taughtening sheets, braces and halyards, went into the cabin to receive the final orders of our commander.

He received my story with his usual bravery, nor was he startled when a boom from the cruiser's gun announced her in chase. He pointed to one of his drawers and told me to take out its contents. I handed him three flags, which he carefully unrolled, and displayed the ensigns of Spain, Denmark and Portugal, in each of which I found a set of papers suitable for the *San Pablo*. In a feeble voice he desired me to select a nationality; and, when I chose the Spanish, he grasped my hand, pointed to the door and bade me not to surrender.

When I reached the deck I found our pursuer gaining on us with the utmost speed. She outsailed us – two to one. Escape was altogether out of the question; yet I resolved to show the inquisitive stranger our mettle, by keeping my course, firing a gun, and hoisting my Spanish signals along peak and main.

At this time the *San Pablo* was spinning along finely at the rate of about six knots an hour, when a shot from the schooner fell close to our stern. In a moment I ordered in studding-sails alow and aloft, and as my men had been trained to their duty in man-of-war fashion I hoped to impose on the cruiser by the style and perfection of the manœuvre. Still, however, she kept her way, and, in four hours after discovery, was within half gun-shot of the brig.

Hitherto I had not touched my armament, but I selected this moment to load under the enemy's eyes, and, at the word of

## MEMOIRS OF A SLAVE-TRADER

command, to fling open the ports and run out my barkers. The act was performed to a charm by my well-drilled gunners; yet all our belligerent display had not the least effect on the schooner, which still pursued us. At last, within hail, her commander leaped on a gun, and ordered me to 'heave to or take a ball!'

Now, I was prepared for this arrogant command, and, for half an hour, had made up my mind how to avoid an engagement. A single discharge of my broadside might have sunk or seriously damaged our antagonist, but the consequences would have been terrible if he boarded me, which I believed to be his aim.

Accordingly, I paid no attention to the threat, but taughtened my ropes and surged ahead. Presently, my chaser came up under my lee within pistol-shot, when a reiterated command to heave to or be fired on was answered for the first time by a faint '*No intiendo*' - 'I don't understand you' - while the man-of-war shot ahead of me.

Then I had him! Quick as thought I gave the order to 'square away,' and putting the helm up, struck the cruiser near the bow, carrying away her foremast and bowsprit. Such was the stranger's surprise at my daring trick that not a musket was fired or boarder stirred till we were clear of the wreck. It was then too late. The loss of my jib-boom and a few rope-yarns did not prevent me from cracking on my studding-sails and leaving the lubber.

Our poor commander died on the following night, and was buried under a choice selection of the flags he had honoured with his various nationalities. A few days after, our cargo was safely ensconced in the *hacienda* nine miles east of St. Jago de Cuba, while the *San Pablo* was sent adrift and burned to the water's edge.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE



THE beneficent disposition of my late commander, though not a regular testament, was carried out in Cuba, and put me in possession of \$12,000 as my share of the enterprise. Yet my restless spirit did not allow me to remain idle. Our successful voyage had secured me scores of friends among the Spanish slavers, and I received daily applications for a fresh command.

But the plans of my French friends had so bewitched me with a desire for imitation, that I declined subordinate posts and aspired to ownership. Accordingly, I proposed to the proprietor of a large American clipper-brig, that we should fit her on the same system as the *San Pablo*; yet, wishing to surpass my late captain in commercial success, I suggested the idea of fighting for our cargo, or, in plainer language, of relieving another slaver of her living freight, a project which promptly found favour with the owner of *La Conchita*. The vessel in question originally cost \$12,000, and I proposed expending an equal sum on her outfit in order to constitute me half owner.

The bargain was struck, and the armament, sails, additional spars, rigging and provisions went on board with prudential secrecy. Inasmuch as we could not leave port without some show of a cargo, merchandise *in bond* was taken from the public warehouses, and, after being loaded in our hold during the day, was smuggled ashore again at night. As the manœuvre was a trick of my accomplice, who privately gained by the operation, I took no notice of what was delivered or taken away.

Finally, all was ready. Forty-five men were shipped, and the *Conchita* cleared. Next day, at daybreak, I was to sail with the land-breeze.

A sailor's last night ashore is proverbial, and till two in the morning I was busy with my adieus; but when I got home at last, with a headache, I was met at the door by a note from my partner, stating that our vessel was seized, and an order issued for my arrest. He counselled me to keep aloof from the

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*alguaziles* till he could arrange the matter with the custom-house and police.

Next day my accomplice was lodged in prison for his fraud, the vessel confiscated, her outfit sold and my purse clipped to the extent of \$12,000. I had barely time to escape before the officers were in my lodgings; and I finally saved myself from prison by taking another name and playing *ranchero* among the hills for several weeks.

My finances were at low-water mark when I strolled one morning into Matanzas, and, after some delay, again obtained command of a slaver through the influence of my old and trusty friends. The new craft was a dashing schooner of 120 tons, fresh from the United States, and intended for Whydah on the Gold Coast. It was calculated that we might bring home at least 450 slaves, for whose purchase I was supplied plentifully with rum, powder, English muskets and rich cottons from Manchester.

In due time we sailed for the Cape de Verds, the usual 'port of despatch' on such excursions; and at Praya exchanged our flag for the Portuguese before we put up our helm for the coast. A British cruiser chased us fruitlessly for two days off Sierra Leone, and enabled me to test the sailing qualities of the *Estrella*.

I consigned the *Estrella* to one of the most remarkable traders that ever expanded the African traffic by his genius.

Señor Da Souza – better known on the coast and interior as Cha-cha – was said to be a native mulatto of Rio Janeiro. I do not know how he reached Africa, but it is probable the fugitive made part of some slaver's crew, and fled from his vessel, as he had previously abandoned the military service of Brazil. For a while his days are said to have been full of misery and trouble, but the Brazilian slave-trade happened to receive an extraordinary impetus about that period; and, gradually, the adventurous refugee managed to profit by his skill in dealing with the natives or by acting as broker among his countrymen.

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He loved the customs of the people. He spoke their language with the fluency of a native. He won the favour of chief after chief. He strove to be considered a perfect African among Africans; though, among whites, he still affected the graceful address and manners of his country. In this way, little by little, Cha-cha advanced in the regard of all he dealt with, and secured the commissions of Brazil and Cuba, while he was regarded and protected as a prime favourite by the warlike king of Dahomey. Indeed, it is alleged that this noted sovereign formed a sort of devilish compact with the Portuguese factor, and supplied him with everything he desired during life in consideration of inheriting his wealth when dead.

But Cha-cha was resolved, while the power of enjoyment was still vouchsafed him, that all the pleasure of human life, accessible to money, should not be wanting in Whydah. He built a large and commodious dwelling on a beautiful spot, near the site of an abandoned Portuguese fort. He filled his establishment with every luxury and comfort that could please the fancy or gratify the body. Wines, food, delicacies and raiment were brought from Paris, London and Havana. The finest women along the coast were lured to his settlement. Billiard tables and gambling halls spread their wiles or afforded distraction for detained navigators. When he sallied forth, his walk was always accompanied by considerable ceremony. An officer preceded him to clear the path, a fool or buffoon hopped beside him, a band of native musicians sounded their discordant instruments, and a couple of singers screamed, at the top of their voices, the most fulsome adulation of the mulatto.

Numbers of vessels were, of course, required to feed this African nabob with doubloons and merchandise. Sometimes commanders from Cuba or Brazil would be kept months in his perilous nest, while their craft cruised along the coast in expectation of human cargoes. At such seasons, no expedient was left untried for the entertainment and pillage of wealthy or trusted idlers. If Cha-cha's board and wines made them drunkards it was no fault of his. If *rouge et noir*, or *monte*, won their doubloons and freight at his saloon, he regretted but

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dared not interfere with the amusements of his guests. If the sirens of his harem betrayed a cargo for their favour over cards, a convenient fire destroyed the frail warehouse after its merchandise was secretly removed!

Cha-cha was exceedingly desirous that I should accept his hospitality. As soon as I read my invoice to him – for he could not do it himself – he became almost irresistible in his *empressement*. Yet I declined the invitation with firm politeness, and took up my quarters on shore at the residence of a native *manfuca* or broker. I was warned of the allurements before I left Matanzas, and resolved to keep myself and property so clear of his clutches that our contract would either be fulfilled or remain within my control. Thus, by avoiding his table, his ‘hells,’ and the society of his dissipated sons, I maintained my business relations with the slaver, and secured his personal respect so effectually, that, at the end of two months, 480 prime negroes were in the bowels of *La Estrella*.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Da Souza died in May 1849. Commander Forbes, R.N., in his book on Dahomey, says that a boy and girl were decapitated and buried with him, and that three men were sacrificed on the beach at Whydah. He alleges that, although this notorious slaver died in May, the funeral honours to his memory were not yet closed in October. ‘The town,’ he says, ‘is still in a ferment. Three hundred of the Amazons are daily in the square, firing and dancing; bands of Fetiche people parade the streets, headed by guinea-fowls, fowls, ducks, goats, pigeons, and pigs, on poles, alive, for sacrifice. Much rum is distributed, and all night there is shouting, firing and dancing.’ – *Dahomey and the Dahomans*, vol. i. p. 49.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

I HAVE always regretted that I left Whydah on my homeward voyage without interpreters to aid in the necessary intercourse with our slaves. There was no one on board who understood a word of their dialect. Many complaints from the negroes that would have been dismissed or satisfactorily adjusted, had we comprehended their vivacious tongues and grievances, were passed over in silence or hushed with the lash. Indeed, the whip alone was *La Estrella's* discipline; and in the end it taught me the saddest of lessons.

From the beginning there was manifest discontent among the slaves. I endeavoured at first to please and accommodate them by a gracious manner; but manner alone is not appreciated by untamed Africans. A few days after our departure, a slave leaped overboard in a fit of passion, and another choked himself during the night. These two suicides, in twenty-four hours, caused much uneasiness among the officers, and induced me to make every preparation for a revolt.

We had been at sea about three weeks without further disturbance, and there was so much merriment among the gangs that were allowed to come on deck that my apprehensions of danger began gradually to wear away. Suddenly, however, one fair afternoon, a squall broke forth from an almost cloudless sky; and as the boatswain's whistle piped all hands to take in sail, a simultaneous rush was made by the confined slaves at all the after-gratings, and, amid the confusion of the rising gale, they knocked down the guard and poured up on deck. The sentry at the *fore-hatch* seized the cook's axe, and, sweeping round him like a scythe, kept at bay the band that sought to emerge from below him. Meantime, the women in the cabin were not idle. Seconding the males, they rose in a body, and the helmsman was forced to stab several with his knife before he could drive them below again.

About forty stalwart devils, yelling and grinning with all the savage ferocity of their wilderness, were now on deck, armed with staves of broken water-casks, or billets of wood, found in

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the hold. The suddenness of this outbreak did not appall me, for, in the dangerous life of Africa, a trader must never be off his guard. The blow that prostrated the first white man was the earliest symptom I detected of the revolt; but, in an instant, I had the arm-chest open on the quarter-deck, and the mate and steward beside me to protect it. Matters, however, did not stand so well forward of the mainmast. Four of the hands were disabled by clubs, while the rest defended themselves and the wounded as well as they could with hand-spikes, or whatever could suddenly be clutched. I had always charged the cook, on such an emergency, to distribute from his coppers a liberal supply of scalding water upon the belligerents; and, at the first sign of revolt, he endeavoured to baptize the heathen with his steaming slush. But dinner had been over for some time, so that the lukewarm liquid only irritated the savages, one of whom laid the 'doctor' bleeding in the scuppers.

All this occurred in perhaps less time than I have taken to tell it; yet, rapid as was the transaction, I saw that, between the squall with its flying sails and the revolt with its raving blacks, we would soon be in a desperate plight, unless I gave the order to shoot. Accordingly, I told my comrades to aim low and fire at once.

Our carabines had been purposely loaded with buck-shot, to suit such an occasion, so that the first two discharges brought several of the rebels to their knees. Still, the unharmed neither fled nor ceased brandishing their weapons. Two more discharges drove them forward amongst the mass of my crew, who had retreated towards the bowsprit; but, being reinforced by the boatswain and carpenter, we took command of the hatches so effectually that a dozen additional discharges among the ebony legs drove the refractory to their quarters below.

It was time; for sails, ropes, tacks, sheets, and blocks were flapping, dashing, and rolling about the masts and decks, threatening us with imminent danger from the squall. In a short time, everything was made snug, the vessel put on our

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course, and attention paid to the mutineers, who had begun to fight among themselves in the hold!

I perceived at once, by the infuriate sounds proceeding from below, that it would not answer to venture in their midst by descending through the hatches. Accordingly, we discharged the women from their quarters under a guard on deck, and sent several resolute and well-armed hands to remove a couple of boards from the bulk-head that separated the cabin from the hold. When this was accomplished, a party entered, on hands and knees, through the aperture, and began to press the mutineers forward towards the bulk-head of the forecastle. Still, the rebels were hot for fight to the last, and boldly defended themselves with their staves against our weapons.

By this time, our lamed cook had rekindled his fires, and the water was once more boiling. The hatches were kept open but guarded, and all who did not fight were suffered to come singly on deck, where they were tied. As only about sixty remained below engaged in conflict, or defying my party of sappers and miners, I ordered a number of auger-holes to be bored in the deck, as the scoundrels were forced forward near the forecastle, when a few buckets of boiling water, rained on them through the fresh apertures, brought the majority to submission. Still, however, two of the most savage held out against water as well as fire. I strove as long as possible to save their lives, but their resistance was so prolonged and perilous that we were obliged to disarm them for ever by a couple of pistol shots.

So ended the sad revolt of *La Estrella*, in which two of my men were seriously wounded, while twenty-eight balls and buck-shot were extracted, with sailors' skill, from the lower limbs of the slaves. One woman and three men perished of blows received in the conflict; but none were deliberately slain except the two men, who resisted unto death.

I could never account for this mutiny, especially as the blacks from Ayudah and its neighbourhood are distinguished for their humble manners and docility. There can be no doubt that the entire gang was not united or concerned in the original

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outbreak, else we should have had harder work in subduing them, amid the risk and turmoil of a West Indian squall.

There was very little comfort on board *La Estrella*, after the suppression of this revolt. We lived with a pent-up volcano beneath us, and, day and night, we were ceaselessly vigilant. Terror reigned supreme, and the lash was its sceptre.

At last we made land at Porto Rico, and were swiftly passing its shores when the inspector called my attention to the appearance of one of our attendant slaves, whom we had drilled as a sort of cabin-boy. He was a gentle, intelligent child, and had won the hearts of all the officers.

His pulse was high, quick and hard; his face and eyes red and swollen; while, on his neck, I detected half a dozen rosy pimples. He was sent immediately to the fore-castle, free from contact with any one else, and left there, cut off from the crew, till I could guard against pestilence. It was small-pox!

The boy passed a wretched night of fever and pain, developing the malady with all its horrors. It is very likely that I slept as badly as the sufferer, for my mind was busy with his doom. Daylight found me on deck in consultation with our veteran boatswain, whose experience in the trade authorized the highest respect for his opinion. Hardened as he was, the old man's eyes filled, his lips trembled, and his voice was husky, as he whispered the verdict in my ear. I guessed it before he said a word; yet I hoped he would have counselled against the dread alternative. As we went aft to the quarter-deck, all eyes were bent upon us, for everyone conjectured the malady and feared the result, yet none dared ask a question.

I ordered a general inspection of the slaves, yet, when a *favourable* report was made, I did not rest content, and descended to examine each one personally. It was true; the child was *alone* infected.

For half an hour, I trod the deck to and fro restlessly, and caused the crew to subject themselves to inspection. But my sailors were as healthy as the slaves. I was disappointed again. A single case – a single sign of peril in any quarter – would have spared the poison!

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That evening, in the stillness of night, a trembling hand stole forward to the afflicted boy with a potion that knows no waking. In a few hours, all was over. Life and the pestilence were crushed together; for a necessary murder had been committed, and the poor victim was beneath the blue water!

Incessant gales and head-winds, unusual in this season and latitude, beset us so obstinately that it became doubtful whether our food and water would last till we reached Matanzas. To add to our risks and misfortunes, a British corvette espied our craft, and gave chase off Cape Maize. All day long she dogged us slowly, but, at night, I tacked off shore, with the expectation of eluding my pursuer. Day dawn, however, revealed her again on our track, though this time we had unfortunately fallen to leeward. Accordingly, I put *La Estrella* directly before the wind, and ran till dark with a fresh breeze, when I again dodged the cruiser, and made for the Cuban coast. But the Briton seemed to scent my track, for sunrise revealed him once more in chase.

The wind lulled that night to a light breeze, yet the red clouds and haze in the east betokened a gale from that quarter before meridian. A longer pursuit must have given considerable advantage to the enemy, so that my best reliance, I calculated, was in making the small harbour near St. Jago, now about twenty miles distant, where I had already landed two cargoes. The corvette was then full ten miles astern.

My resolution to save the cargo and lose the vessel was promptly made; orders were issued to strike from the slaves the irons they had constantly worn since the mutiny; the boats were made ready; and every man prepared his bag for a rapid launch.

On dashed the cruiser, foaming at the bows, under the impetus of the rising gale, which struck him some time before it reached us. We were not more than seven miles apart when the first increased pressure on our sails was felt, and everything was set and braced to give it the earliest welcome. Then came the race for the beach, three miles ahead. Three miles against

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seven were too much odds; and, with a slight move of the helm, and 'letting all fly,' as we neared the line of surf, to break her headway, *La Estrella* was fairly and safely beached.

The sudden shock snapped her mainmast like a pipe-stem, but, as no one was injured, in a twinkling the boats were overboard, crammed with women and children, while a stage was rigged from the bows to the strand, so that the males, the crew and the luggage were soon in charge of my old *haciendado*.

Prompt as we were, we were not sufficiently so for the cruiser. Half our cargo was ashore when she backed her topsails off the mouth of the little bay, lowered her boats, filled them with boarders, and steered towards our craft. The delay of half a mile's row gave us time to cling still longer to the wreck, so that, when the boats and corvette began to fire, we wished them joy of their bargain over the remnant of our least valuable negroes. The rescued blacks are now, in all likelihood, citizens of Jamaica; but, under the influence of the gale, *La Estrella* made a very picturesque bonfire that night.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN



DISASTROUS as was this enterprise, both on the sea and in the counting-house, a couple of months found me on board a splendid clipper, of the name of *Aguila de Oro*, or *Golden Eagle*, and spinning out of the Cape de Verds on a race with a famous West Indian privateer. I entered the Rio Salum, an independent river between the French island of Goree and the British possessions on the Gambia. No slaver had haunted this stream for many a year, so that I was obliged to steer my mosquito pilot-boat full forty miles in the interior, through mangroves and forests, till I struck the trading ground of 'the king.'

After three days' parley I had just concluded my bargain with his breechless majesty, when a 'barker' greeted me with the cheerless message that the *Aguila* was surrounded by man-of-war boats! It was true; but the mate refused an inspection of his craft *on neutral ground*, and the naval folks departed. Nevertheless, a week after, when I had just completed my traffic, I was seized by a gang of the treacherous king's own people; delivered to the second lieutenant of a French corvette, and my lovely little *Eagle* caged as her lawful prey!

I have never been able to understand the legal merits of this seizure, so far as the act of the French officers was concerned, as no treaty existed between France and Spain for the suppression of slavery. There was a very loud explosion of wrath among my men when they found themselves prisoners; nor was their fury diminished when our whole band was forced into a dungeon at Goree, which, for size, gloom, and closeness, vied with the celebrated black hole of Calcutta.

For three days were we kept in this filthy receptacle, in a burning climate, without communication with friends or inhabitants, and on scanty fare, till it suited the local authorities to transfer us to San Luis, on the Senegal, in charge of a file of marines, on board our own vessel!

San Luis is the residence of the governor and the seat of the colonial tribunal, and here again we were incarcerated in a

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military *cachôt*, till several merchants who knew me on the Rio Pongo interfered, and had us removed to better quarters in the military hospital. I soon learned that there was trouble among the natives. A war had broken out among some of the Moorish tribes, some two hundred miles up the Senegal, and my *Aguila* was a godsend to the Frenchmen, who needed just such a light craft to guard their returning flotilla with merchandise from Gatam. Accordingly, the craft was armed, manned, and despatched on this expedition without waiting the decree of a court as to the lawfulness of her seizure!

Meanwhile, the sisters of charity - those angels of devoted mercy, who do not shun even the heats and pestilence of Africa - made our prison life as comfortable as possible; and had we not seen gratings at the windows, or met a sentinel when we attempted to go out, we might have considered ourselves valetudinarians instead of convicts.

A month oozed slowly away in these headquarters of suffering, before a military sergeant apprised us that he had been elevated to the dignity of the long-robe, and appointed our counsel in the approaching trial. No other lawyer was to be had in the colony for love or money, and, perhaps, our military man might have acquitted himself as well as the best, had not his superiors often imposed silence on him during the argument.

By this time the nimble *Aguila* had made two most serviceable trips under the French officers, and proved so valuable to the Gallic government that no one dreamed of recovering her. The colonial authorities had two alternatives under the circumstances - either to pay for or condemn her - and as they knew I would not be willing to take the craft again after the destruction of my voyage, the formality of a trial was determined to legalize the condemnation. It was necessary, however, even in Africa, to show that I had violated the territory of the French colony by trading in slaves, and that the *Aguila* had been caught in the act.

After various outrages and absurdities, a Mahometan *slave* was allowed to be sworn as a witness against me. The foregone

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conclusion was formally announced. The *Agnila de Oro* became King Louis Philippe's property, while my men were condemned to two, my officers to five, and Don Téodore himself to ten years' confinement in France.

My sentence aroused the indignation of many respectable merchants at San Luis. It was found to be entirely useless to attack the sympathy of the tribunal, either to procure a rehearing of the cause or mitigation of the judgment. Presently, a generous friend introduced a saw suitable to iron bars, and hinted that on the night when my window gratings were severed, a boat might be found waiting to transport me to the opposite shore of the river, whence an independent chief would convey me on camels to Gambia.

The government got wind of my projected flight, and we were sent on board a station ship lying in the stream. Still my friends did not abandon me. I was apprised that a party – bound on a shooting frolic down the river on the first foggy morning – would visit the commander of the hulk, and while the vessel was surrounded by a crowd of boats, I might slip overboard amid the confusion. Under cover of the dense mist that shrouds the surface of an African river at dawn, I could easily elude a ball sent after me, and when I reached the shore a canoe would be ready to convey me to a friendly ship.

The scheme was peculiarly feasible, as the captain allowed me unlimited liberty about his vessel. Accordingly, I called my officers apart, and proposed their participation in my escape. The project was fully discussed by the fellows; but the risk of swimming, even in a fog, under the muzzles of muskets, was a danger they feared encountering. I perceived at once that it would be best to free myself entirely from the encumbrance of such chicken-hearted lubbers, so I bade them take their own course, but divided three thousand francs in government bills among the gang, and presented my gold pocket chronometer to the mate.

Next morning an impervious fog laid low on the bosom of the Senegal, but through its heavy folds I detected the measured beat of approaching oars, till five boats, with a

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sudden rush, dashed alongside us with their noisy and clamorous crews.

Just at this very moment a friendly hand passed through my arm, and a gentle tone invited me to a quarter-deck promenade. It was our captain! When we were perfectly alone, he frankly declared that I had been betrayed to his sergeant of marines! I was taken perfectly aback, as I imagined myself almost free, yet the loss of liberty did not paralyse me as much as the perfidy of my men.

My friends were entreated not to risk further attempts, which might subject me to severe restraints; and my base comrades were forthwith summoned to the cabin, where, in presence of the merchants, they were forced to disgorge the three thousand francs and the chronometer.

For fifteen days more the angry captive bit his thumbs on the taffrail of the guard-ship, and gazed either at vacancy or the waters of the Senegal. At the end of that period, a gunboat transferred our convict party to the frigate *Flora*, whose first lieutenant, to whom I had been privately recommended, separated me immediately from my men. The scoundrels were kept close prisoners during the whole voyage to France, while my lot was made as light as possible, under the severe sentence awarded at San Luis.

The passage was short. At Brest they landed me privately, while my men and officers were paraded through the streets at mid-day, under a file of *gens d'armes*.

My men were distributed among the cells with common malefactors; but as the appearance of the officers indicated the possession of cash, the turnkey offered '*la salle de distinction*' for our use, provided we were satisfied with a monthly rent of ten francs. On reflection, I concluded to accept the offer, hard as it was, and, accordingly, we took possession of a large apartment, with two grated windows looking upon a narrow and sombre courtyard.

We had hardly entered the room when a buxom woman followed with the deepest curtseys, and declared herself 'most happy to have it in her power to supply us with beds and

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bedding, at ten *sous* per day.' She apprised us, moreover, that the daily prison fare consisted of two pounds and a half of black bread, with water à *discretion*, but if we wished, she might introduce the *vivandière* of the regiment stationed in the chateau, who would supply our meals twice a day from the mess of the petty officers. I did not hesitate to strike a bargain, and at once proceeded to arrange the diet of our future prison life. We were to have two meals a day of three dishes, for each of which we were to pay fifteen *sous* in advance.

As I before said, the *regular ration* consisted exclusively of black bread and water. Nine pounds of straw were allowed weekly to each prisoner for his *lair*. Neither blankets nor covering were furnished, even in the winter, and as the cells are built without stoves or chimneys, the wretched convicts were compelled to huddle together in heaps to keep from perishing. Besides this, the government denied all supplies of fresh raiment, so that the wretches who were destitute of friends or means were alive and hideous with vermin in a few days after incarceration. No amusement was allowed in the fresh air save twice a week, when the prisoners were turned out on the flat roof of the tower, where they might sun themselves for an hour or two under the muzzle of a guard.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

SOON I heard from a relative in Paris that my petition had been presented to Louis Philippe, whose reception of it encouraged a hope for my pardon. At length my pardon and freedom came; but this was the sole reparation I received at the hands of Louis Philippe, for the unjust seizure and appropriation of my vessel in the neutral waters of Africa. Next day a vessel, by order of the king, was to bear me, a willing exile, from France for ever.

The vessel that bore me into perpetual banishment from France was bound to Lisbon; but, delaying in Portugal only long enough to procure a new passport, under an assumed name, I spat upon Louis Philippe's 'eternal exile,' and took shipping for his port of Marseilles! Here I found two vessels fitting for the coast of Africa; but, in consequence of the frightful prevalence of cholera, all mercantile adventures were temporarily suspended. In fact, such was the panic that no one dreamed of despatching the vessel in which I was promised a passage until the pestilence subsided. Till this occurred, as my means were of the scantiest character, I took lodgings in an humble hotel.

The dreadful malady was then apparently at its height, and most of the regular inhabitants had fled; while the city was unfrequented by strangers except under pressing duty. It is altogether probable that the lodging-houses and hotels would have been closed entirely, so slight was their patronage, had not the prefect issued an order, depriving of their licences, for the space of two years, all who shut their doors on strangers. Accordingly, even when the scourge swept many hundred victims daily to their graves, every hotel, café, grocery, butcher shop, and bakery was regularly opened in Marseilles; so that a dread of famine was not added to the fear of cholera.

In the first lull of the pestilence, the French merchantman was despatched from Marseilles, and, in twenty-seven days, I had the pleasure to shake hands with the generous friends who, two years before, laboured so hard for my escape. The colonial

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government soon got wind of my presence notwithstanding my disguise, and warning me from Goree, cut short the joys of an African welcome.

I reached Sierra Leone in time to witness the arbitrary proceeding of the British government towards Spanish traders and coasters by virtue of the treaty for the suppression of the slave trade. *Six months* after this compact was signed and ratified in London and Madrid, it was made known with the proverbial despatch of Spain, in the islands of Cuba and Porto Rico. Its stipulations were such as to allow very considerable latitude of judgment in captures; and when prizes were once within the grasp of the British lion, that amiable animal was neither prompt to release nor anxious to acquit. Accordingly, when I reached Sierra Leone, I beheld at anchor under government guns some thirty or forty vessels seized by cruisers, several of which I have reason to believe were captured in the 'Middle Passage,' bound from Havana to Spain, but entirely free from the taint or design of slavery.

I was not so inquisitive as to dally from mere curiosity in Sierra Leone. My chief object was employment. At twenty-eight, after trials, hazards, and chances enough to have won half a dozen fortunes, I was utterly penniless, and was reduced to the humble situation of coast-pilot and interpreter on board an American brig bound to the celebrated slave mart of Gallinas! We reached our destination safely; but I doubt exceedingly whether the *Reaper's* captain knows to this day that his brig was guided by a marine adventurer who knew nothing of the coast or port save the little he gleaned in half a dozen chats with a Spaniard, who was familiar with this notorious resort and its surroundings.

Our concern is now with Gallinas. Nearly one hundred miles north-west of Monrovia, a short and sluggish river, bearing this well-known name, oozes lazily into the Atlantic; and, carrying down in the rainy season a rich alluvion from the interior, sinks the deposit where the tide meets the Atlantic, and forms an interminable mesh of spongy islands. To one who approaches from sea, they loom up from its surface,

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covered with reeds and mangroves, like an immense field of *fungi*. A spot like this possessed, of course, no peculiar advantages for agriculture or commerce; but its dangerous bar, and its extreme desolation, fitted it for the haunt of the outlaw and slaver.

Such, in all likelihood, were the reasons that induced Don Pedro Blanco, a well-educated mariner from Malaga, to select Gallinas as the field of his operations. Don Pedro visited this place originally in command of a slaver; but failing to complete his cargo, sent his vessel back with one hundred negroes, whose value was barely sufficient to pay the mates and crew. Blanco, however, remained on the coast with a portion of the cargo, and, on its basis, began a trade with the natives and slaver-captains, till, four years after, he remitted his owners the product of their merchandise, and began to flourish on his own account. The honest return of an investment long given over as lost was perhaps the most active stimulant of his success, and for many years he monopolized the traffic of the Vey country, reaping enormous profits from his enterprise.

Gallinas was not in its prime when I came thither, yet enough of its ancient power and influence remained to show the comprehensive mind of Pedro Blanco. As I entered the river, and wound along through the labyrinth of islands, I was struck, first of all, with the vigilance that made this Spaniard stud the field with look-out seats, protected from sun and rain, erected some seventy-five or hundred feet above the ground, either on poles or on isolated trees, from which the horizon was constantly swept by telescopes, to announce the approach of cruisers or slavers. These telegraphic operators were the keenest men on the islands, who were never at fault in discriminating between friend and foe. About a mile from the river's mouth we found a group of islets, on each of which was erected the factory of some particular slave-merchant belonging to the grand confederacy. Blanco's establishments were on several of these marshy flats. On one, near the mouth, he had his place of business or trade with foreign vessels, presided over by his principal clerk, an astute and clever gentleman. On another

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island, more remote, was his residence, where the only white person was a sister, who for a while shared with Don Pedro his solitary and penitential domain. Here this man of education and refined address surrounded himself with every luxury that could be purchased in Europe or the Indies, and dwelt in a sort of Oriental but semi-barbarous splendour that suited an African prince rather than a Spanish grandee. Further inland was another islet, devoted to his seraglio, within whose recesses each of his favourites inhabited her separate establishment, after the fashion of the natives. Independent of all these were other islands, devoted to the barracoons or slave prisons, ten or twelve of which contained from one hundred to five hundred slaves in each. These barracoons were made of rough staves or poles of the hardest trees, four or six inches in diameter, driven five feet in the ground, and clamped together by double rows of iron bars. Their roofs were constructed of similar wood, strongly secured, and overlaid with a thick thatch of long and wiry grass, rendering the interior both dry and cool. At the ends, watch-houses - built near the entrance - were tenanted by sentinels, with loaded muskets. Each barracoon was tended by two or four Spaniards or Portuguese; but I have rarely met a more wretched class of human beings, upon whom fever and dropsy seemed to have emptied their vials.

Such were the surroundings of Don Pedro in 1836, when I first saw his slender figure, swarthy face, and received the graceful welcome, which I hardly expected from one who had passed fifteen years without crossing the bar of Gallinas! Three years after this interview he left the coast for ever, with a fortune of near a million. For a while he dwelt in Havana, engaged in commerce; but I understood that family difficulties induced him to retire altogether from trade; so that, if still alive, he is probably a resident of Genoa.

The power of this man among the natives far exceeded that of Cha-cha, of whom I have already spoken. Resolved as he was to be successful in traffic, he left no means untried, with blacks as well as whites, to secure prosperity. I have often been asked what was the character of a mind which could

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voluntarily isolate itself for near a lifetime amid the pestilential swamps of a burning climate, trafficking in human flesh, exciting wars, bribing and corrupting ignorant negroes; totally without society, amusement, excitement, or change; living from year to year the same dull round of seasons and faces; without companionship, save that of men at war with law; cut loose from all ties except those which avarice formed among European outcasts who were willing to become satellites to such as Don Pedro? I have always replied to the question that this African enigma puzzled *me* as well as those orderly and systematic persons, who would naturally be more shocked at the tastes and prolonged career of a resident slave-factor in the marshes of Gallinas.

I heard many tales on the coast of Blanco's cruelty, but I doubt them quite as much as I do the stories of his pride and arrogance. I have heard it said that he shot a sailor for daring to ask him for permission to light his cigar at the *puro* of the Don. Upon another occasion, it is said that he was travelling the beach some distance from Gallinas, near the island of Sherbro, where he was unknown, when he approached a native hut for rest and refreshment. The owner was squatted at the door, and on being requested by Don Pedro to hand him fire to light his cigar, deliberately refused. In an instant Blanco drew back, seized a carabine from one of his attendants, and slew the negro on the spot. It is true that the narrator apologized for Don Pedro by saying that to deny a Castilian fire for his tobacco was the gravest insult that can be offered him; yet, from my knowledge of the person in question, I cannot believe that he carried etiquette to so frightful a pitch, even among a class whose lives are considered of trifling value *except in market*. On several occasions during our subsequent intimacy, I knew him to chastise with rods, even to the brink of death, servants who ventured to infringe the sacred limits of his *seraglio*. But, on the other hand, his generosity was proverbially ostentatious, not only among the natives, whom it was his interest to suborn, but to the whites who were in his employ, or needed his kindly succour. I have already alluded to his

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mental culture, which was decidedly *soigné* for a Spaniard of his original grade and time. His memory was remarkable. I remember one night, while several of his employes were striving unsuccessfully to repeat the Lord's prayer in Latin, upon which they had made a bet. that Don Pedro, taking up the wager, went through the petition without faltering. The slaver insisted on receiving the slave which was the stake, and immediately bestowed him in charity on a captain who had fallen into the clutches of a British cruiser!

Such is a rude sketch of the great man-merchant of Africa, the Rothschild of slavery, whose bills on England, France, or the United States were as good as gold in Sierra Leone and Monrovia!

## CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE



THE day after our arrival within the realm of this great spider – who, throned in the centre of his mesh, was able to catch almost every fly that flew athwart the web – I landed at one of the minor factories, and sold a thousand quarter kegs of powder to Don José Ramon. But, next day, when I proceeded in my capacity of interpreter to the establishment of Don Pedro, I found his Castilian plumage ruffled, and, though we were received with formal politeness, he declined to purchase, because we had failed to address *him* in advance of any other factor on the river.

The folks at Sierra Leone dwelt so tenderly on the generous side of Blanco's character that I was still not without hope that I might induce him to purchase a good deal of our rum and tobacco, which would be drugs on our hands unless he consented to relieve us. I did not think it altogether wrong, therefore, to concoct a little *ruse* whereby I hoped to touch the pocket through the breast of the Don. In fact, I addressed him a note, in which I truly related my recent mishaps, adventures, and imprisonments; but I concluded the narrative with a hope that he would succour one so destitute and unhappy, by allowing him to win an honest *commission* allowed by the American captain on any sales I could effect. The bait took; a prompt, laconic answer returned; I was bidden to come ashore with the invoice of our cargo; and, for my sake, Don Pedro purchased from the Yankee brig five thousand dollars' worth of rum and tobacco, all of which was paid by drafts on London, of which slaves were, of course, the original basis! My imaginary commissions, however, remained in the purse of the owners.

An accident occurred in landing our merchandise which will serve to illustrate the character of Blanco. While the hogsheads of tobacco were discharging, our second mate, who suffered from strabismus more painfully than almost any cross-eyed man I ever saw, became excessively provoked with one of the native boatmen who had been employed in the service.

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It is probable that the negro was insolent, which the mate thought proper to chastise by throwing staves at the Krooman's head. The negro fled, seeking refuge on the other side of his canoe; but the enraged officer continued the pursuit, and, in his double-sighted blundering, ran against an oar which the persecuted black suddenly lifted in self-defence. I know not whether it was rage or blindness, or both combined, that prevented the American from seeing the blade, but on he dashed, rushing impetuously against the implement, severing his lip with a frightful gash, and knocking four teeth from his upper jaw.

Of course, the luckless negro instantly fled to 'the bush'; and that night, in the agony of delirium caused by fever and dreaded deformity, the mate terminated his existence by laudanum.

The African law condemns the man who *draws blood* to a severe fine in slaves, proportioned to the harm that may have been inflicted. Accordingly, the culprit Krooman, innocent as he was of premeditated evil, now lay heavily loaded with irons in Don Pedro's barracoon, awaiting the sentence which the whites in his service already declared should be death. 'He struck a white!' they said, and the wound he inflicted was reported to have caused that white man's ruin. But luckily, before the sentence was executed, I came ashore, and, as the transaction occurred in my presence, I ventured to appeal from the verdict of public opinion to Don Pedro, with the hope that I might exculpate the Krooman. My simple and truthful story was sufficient. An order was instantly given for the black's release, and, in spite of native chiefs and grumbling whites, who were savagely greedy for the fellow's blood, Don Pedro persisted in his judgment and sent him back on board the *Reaper*.

The character manifested by Blanco on this occasion, and the admirable management of his factory, induced me to seize a favourable moment to offer my services to the mighty trader. They were promptly accepted, and in a short time I was employed as principal in one of Don Pedro's branches.

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The Vey natives on this river and its neighbourhood were not numerous before the establishment of Spanish factories, but since 1813, the epoch of the arrival of several Cuban vessels with rich merchandise, the neighbouring tribes flocked to the swampy flats, and greedily acquired the habit of hunting their own kind and abandoned all other occupations but war and kidnapping. The thousands and tens of thousands annually sent abroad from Gallinas, soon began to exhaust the neighbourhood: but the appetite for plunder was neither satiated nor stopped by distance, when it became necessary for the neighbouring natives to extend their forays and hunts far into the interior. In a few years war raged wherever the influence of this river extended. The slave factories supplied the huntsmen with powder, weapons, and enticing merchandise, so that they fearlessly advanced against ignorant multitudes, who, too silly to comprehend the benefit of alliance, fought the aggressors singly, and, of course, became their prey.

Still, however, the demand increased. Don Pedro had struck a vein richer than the Gold Coast. New factories were established, as branches, north and south of the parent den. Mana-Rock, Sherboro, Sugarei, Cape Mount, Little Cape Mount, and even Digbay, at the door of Monrovia, all had depots and barracoons of slaves belonging to the whites of Gallinas. But this prosperity did not endure. A civil war, which was designed for revengeful murder rather than slavery, was kindled by a Paris, who had deprived his uncle of an Ethiopian Helen.

The geographical configuration of the country, as I have described it, isolated almost every family of note on various branches of the river, so that nearly all were enabled to fortify themselves within their islands or marshy flats. The principal parties in this family feud were the Amarars and Shiakars. Amarar was a native of Shebar, and, through several generations, had Mandingo blood in his veins; Shiakar, born on the river, considered himself a noble of the land, and being aggressor in this conflict, disputed his prize with the wildest ferocity of a

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savage. The whites, who are ever on the watch for native quarrels, wisely refrained from partisanship with either of the combatants, but continued to purchase the prisoners brought to their factories by both parties. Many a vessel bore across the Atlantic two inveterate enemies shackled to the same bolt, while others met on the same deck a long-lost child or brother who had been captured in the civil war.

I might fill a volume with the narrative of this horrid conflict before it was terminated by the death of Amarar. For several months this savage had been blockaded in his stockade by Shiakar's warriors. At length a sortie became indispensable to obtain provisions, but the enemy were too numerous to justify the risk. Upon this, Amarar called his soothsayer, and required him to name a propitious moment for the sally. The oracle retired to his den, and, after suitable incantations, declared that the effort should be made as soon as the hands of Amarar were stained in the blood of his own son. It is said that the prophet intended the victim to be a youthful son of Amarar, who had joined his mother's family, and was then distant; but the impatient and superstitious savage, seeing a child of his own, two years old, at hand, when the oracle announced the decree, snatched the infant from its mother's arms, threw it into a rice mortar, and, with a pestle, mashed it to death!

The sacrifice over, a sortie was ordered. The infuriate and starving savages, roused by the oracle and inflamed by the bloody scene, rushed forth tumultuously. Amarar, armed with the pestle, still warm and reeking with his infant's blood, was foremost in the onset. The besiegers gave way and fled; the town was re-provisioned; the fortifications of the enemy demolished, and the soothsayer rewarded with a slave for his barbarous prediction!

At another time, Amarar was on the point of attacking a strongly fortified town, when doubts were intimated of success. Again the wizard was consulted, when the mysterious oracle declared that the chief 'could not conquer till he returned once more to his mother's womb.' That night Amarar committed

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the blackest of incests; but his party was repulsed, and the false prophet stoned to death.

These are faint incidents of a savage drama which lasted several years, until Amarar, in his native town, became the prisoner of Shiakar's soldiery. Mana, his captor, caused him to be decapitated; and while the blood still streamed from the severed neck, the monster's head was thrust into the fresh-torn bowels of his mother!

## CHAPTER THIRTY



THE first expedition upon which Don Pedro Blanco despatched me revealed a new phase of Africa to my astonished eyes. I was sent in a small Portuguese schooner to Liberia for tobacco; and here the trader who had never contemplated the negro on the shores of his parent country except as a slave or a catcher of slaves, first beheld the rudiments of an infant state, which in time may become the wedge of Ethiopian civilization. The comfortable government house, neat public warerooms, large emigration home, designed for the accommodation of the houseless; clean and spacious streets, with brick stores and dwellings; the twin churches with their bells and comfortable surroundings; the genial welcome from well-dressed negroes; the regular wharves and trim craft on the stocks, and last of all, a visit from a coloured collector with a *printed* bill for twelve dollars 'anchor dues,' all convinced me that there was, in truth, something more in these ebony frames than an article of commerce and labour. I paid the bill eagerly, considering that a document printed in Africa by negroes, under North American influence, would be a curiosity among the infidels of Gallinas!

My engagements with Blanco had been made on the basis of familiarity with the slave-trade in all its branches, but my independent spirit and impatient temper forbade, from the first, the acceptance of any subordinate position at Gallinas. Accordingly, as soon as I returned from the new republic, Don Pedro desired me to prepare for the establishment of a branch factory, under my exclusive control, at New Sestros, an independent principality in the hands of a Bassa chief.

I lost no time in setting forth on this career of comparative independence, and landed with the trading cargo provided for me at the Kroomen's town, where I thought it best to dwell till a factory could be built.

An African, as well as a white man, must be drilled into the traffic. It is one of those things that do not 'come by nature': yet its mysteries are acquired, like the mysteries of commerce generally, with much more facility by some tribes than others.

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I found this signally illustrated by the prince and people of New Sestros, and very soon detected their great inferiority to the Soosoos, Mandingoes, and Veys. For a time their conduct was so silly, arrogant, and trifling, that I closed my chests and broke off communication. Besides this, the slaves they offered were of an inferior character and held at exorbitant prices. Still, as I was commanded to purchase rapidly, I managed to collect about seventy-five negroes of medium grades, all of whom I designed sending to Gallinas in the schooner that was tugging at her anchor off the beach.

At the proper time I sent for the black prince to assist me in shipping the slaves, and to receive the head money which was his export duty on my cargo. The answer to my message was an illustration of the character and insolence of the ragamuffins with whom I had to deal. 'The prince,' returned my messenger, 'don't like your sauciness, and won't come till you beg his pardon by a present!'

It is very true that after my visit to their republic, I began to entertain a greater degree of respect than was my wont, for black men, yet my contempt for the original, unmodified race was so great that when the prince's son, a boy of sixteen, delivered this reply on behalf of his father, I did not hesitate to cram it down his throat by a back-handed blow, which sent the sprig of royalty bleeding and howling home.

It may be easily imagined what was the condition of the native town when the boy got back to the 'palace.' In less than ten minutes, another messenger arrived with an order for my departure from the country 'before next day at noon' – an order which, the envoy declared, would be *enforced* by the outraged townsfolk unless I willingly complied.

Now, I had been too long in Africa to tremble before a negro prince, and though I really hated the region, I determined to disobey in order to teach the upstart a lesson. Accordingly, I made preparations for resistance, and, when my hired servants and *barracooniers* fled in terror at the prince's command, I landed some whites from my schooner to aid in protecting our slaves.

My house had been constructed of the frail bamboos and

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matting which are exclusively used in the buildings of the Bassa country. I had added a cane verandah or piazza to mine, and protected it from the pilfering natives by a high palisade that effectually excluded all intruders. Within the area of this enclosure was slung my hammock, and here I ate my meals, read, wrote, and received 'princes' as well as the mob.

At nightfall, I loaded twenty-five muskets, and placed them inside my sofa, which was a long trade-chest. I covered the deal-table with a blanket, beneath whose pendant folds I concealed a keg of powder with the head out. Hard by, under a broad-brimmed *sombrero*, lay a pair of double-barrelled pistols. With these dispositions I swung myself asleep in the hammock, and leaving the three whites to take turns in watching, never stirred till an hour after sunrise, when I was roused by the war-drum and bells from the village, announcing the prince's approach.

In a few minutes my small enclosure of palisades was filled with armed and gibbering savages, while his majesty, in the red coat of a British drummer, but without any trousers, strutted pompously into my presence. I assumed an air of humble civility, and leading the potentate to one end of the guarded piazza, where he was completely isolated from his people, I stationed myself between the table and the *sombrero*. Some of the prince's relations attempted to follow him within my enclosure, but, according to established rules, they dared not advance beyond an assigned limit.

When the formalities were over, a dead silence prevailed for some minutes. I looked calmly and firmly into the prince's eyes, and waited for him to speak. Still he was silent. At last, getting tired of dumb-show, I asked the negro if he had 'come to assist me in shipping my slaves; the sun is getting rather high,' said I, 'and we had better begin without delay!'

'Did you get my message?' was his reply, 'and why haven't you gone?'

'Of course I received your message,' returned I, 'but as I came to New Sestros at my leisure, I intend to go away when it suits me. Besides this, Prince Freeman, I have no fear that you

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will do me the least harm, especially as I shall be before you in any capers of that sort.'

Then, by a sudden jerk, I threw off the blanket that hid the exposed powder, and, with pistols in hand, one aimed at the keg and the other at the king, I dared him to give an order for my expulsion.

It is inconceivable how *moving* this process proved, not only to Freeman, but to the crowd comprising his bodyguard. The poor blusterer, entirely cut off from his companions, was in a laughable panic. His tawny skin became ashen, as he bounded from his seat and rushed to the extremity of the piazza; and in a few minutes he was as penitent and humble as a dog.

I was, of course, not unforgiving, when Freeman advanced to the rail, and warning the blacks that he had 'changed his mind,' ordered the odorous crowd out of my enclosure. Before the negroes departed, however, I made him swear eternal fidelity and friendship in their presence, after which I sealed the compact with a couple of demijohns of New England rum.

Before sunset, seventy-five slaves were shipped for me in his canoes, and ever after, Prince Freeman was a model monument of the virtues of gunpowder physic!

## CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

THE summary treatment of this potentate had the best effect on the adjacent inland as well as the immediate coast. The free blacks not only treated my person and people with more respect, but began to supply me with better grades of negroes; so that when Don Pedro found my success increasing, he not only resolved to establish a permanent factory, but enlarged my commission to ten slaves for every hundred I procured. Thereupon, I at once commenced the erection of buildings suitable for my personal comfort and the security of slaves. I selected a pretty site closer to the beach. A commodious two-story house, surrounded by double verandahs, was topped by a look-out which commanded an ocean-view of vast extent, and flanked by houses for all the necessities of a first-rate factory. There were stores, a private kitchen, a rice house, houses for domestic servants, a public workshop, a depot for water, a slave-kitchen, huts for single men, and sheds under which gangs were allowed to recreate from time to time during daylight. The whole was surrounded by a tall hedge-fence, thickly planted, and entered by a double gate, on either side of which were long and separate *barracoons* for males and females. The entrance of each slave-pen was commanded by a cannon, while in the centre of the square, I left a vacant space, whereon I have often seen seven hundred slaves, guarded by half a dozen musketeers, singing, drumming and dancing, after their frugal meals.

It is a pleasant fancy of the natives, who find our surnames rather difficult of pronunciation, while they know very little of the Christian calendar, to baptize a newcomer with some title, for which any chattel or merchandise that strikes their fancy is apt to stand godfather. My exploit with the prince christened me 'Powder' on the spot; but when they saw my magnificent establishment, beheld the wealth of my warehouse, and heard the name of 'store,' I was forthwith whitewashed into '*Storee*.'

In a few months, New Sestros was alive. The isolated beach, which before my arrival was dotted with half a dozen Kroo hovels, now counted a couple of flourishing towns, whose

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inhabitants were supplied with merchandise and labour in my factory. The neighbouring princes and chiefs, confident of selling their captives, struggled to the sea-shore through the trackless forest; and in a very brief period, Prince Freeman, who 'no likee war' over my powder-keg, sent expedition after expedition against adjacent tribes, to redress imaginary grievances, or to settle old bills with his great-grandfather's debtors.

Still, I am confident that during my stay, greater strides were made towards modern civilization than during the visit of any other factor. When I landed among the handful of savages I found them given up to the basest superstition. All classes of males as well as females were liable to be accused upon any pretext by the *ju-ju-men* or priests, and the dangerous *saucy-wood* potion was invariably administered to test their guilt or innocence. It frequently happened that accusations of witchcraft or evil practices were purchased from these wretches in order to get rid of a sick wife, an imbecile parent, or an opulent relative; and, as the poisonous draught was mixed and graduated by the *ju-ju-man*, it rarely failed to prove fatal when the drinker's death was necessary. Ordeals of this character occurred almost daily in the neighbouring country, of course destroying numbers of innocent victims of cupidity or malice. I very soon observed the frequency of this abominable crime, and when it was next attempted in the little settlement that clustered around my factory, I respectfully requested that the accused might be locked up for safety in my *barracoon*, till the fatal liquid was prepared and the hour for its administration arrived.

It will be readily understood that the saucy-wood beverage, like any other, may be prepared in various degrees of strength, so that the operator has entire control of its noxious qualities. If the accused has friends, either to pay or tamper with the medicator, the draft is commonly made weak enough to ensure its harmless rejection from the culprit's stomach; but when the victim is friendless, time is allowed for the entire venom to exude, and the drinker dies ere he can drink the second bowl.

Very soon after the offer of my *barracoon* as a prison for the

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accused, a Krooman was brought to it, accused of causing his nephew's death by fatal incantations. The *ju-ju* had been consulted and confirmed the suspicion; whereupon the luckless negro was seized, ironed, and delivered to my custody.

Next day early the *ju-ju-man* ground his bark, mixed it with water, and simmered the potion over a slow fire to extract the poison's strength. As I had reason to believe that especial enmity was entertained against the imprisoned uncle, I called at the *ju-ju's* hovel while the medication was proceeding, and, with the bribe of a bottle, requested him to impart triple power to the noxious draught. My own *ju-ju*, I said, had nullified his by pronouncing the accused innocent, and I was exceedingly anxious to test the relative truth of our soothsayers.

The rascal promised implicit compliance, and I hastened back to the *barracoon* to await the fatal hour. Up to the very moment of the draught's administration, I remained alone with the culprit, and administering a double dose of tartar-emetic just before the gate was opened, I led him forth loaded with irons. The negro, confident of the white man's superior witchcraft, swallowed the draught without a wink, and in less than a minute, the rejected venom established his innocence, and covered the African wizard with confusion.

This important trial and its results were, of course, noised abroad; and, ever afterwards, the accused were brought to my sanctuary, where the conflicting charm of my emetic soon conquered the native poison and saved many a useful life. In a short time the malicious practice was discontinued altogether.

During the favourable season, I had been deprived of three vessels by British cruisers, and, for as many months, had not shipped a single slave, 500 of whom were now crowded in my *barracoons*, and demanded our utmost vigilance for safe keeping. In the gang, I found a family consisting of a man, his wife, three children and a sister, all sold under an express obligation of exile and slavery among Christians. The luckless father was captured by my blackguard friend Prince Freeman in person, and the family had been secured when the parent's village was

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subsequently stormed. Barrah was an outlaw and an especial offender in the eyes of an African, though his faults were hardly greater than the deeds that bestowed honour and knight-hood in the days of our ancestral feudalism. Barrah was the discarded son of a chief in the interior, and had presumed to blockade the public path towards the beach, and collect duties from transient passengers or caravans. This interfered with Freeman and his revenues; but, in addition to the pecuniary damage, the alleged robber ventured on several occasions to defeat and plunder the prince's vagabonds, so that, in time, he became rich and strong enough to build a town and fortify it with a regular stockade, *directly on the highway*. All these offences were so heinous in the sight of my beach prince that no foot was suffered to cool till Barrah was captured. Once within his power, Freeman would not have hesitated to kill his implacable enemy as soon as delivered at New Sestros; but the interference of friends, and, perhaps, the laudable conviction that a live negro was worth more than a dead one, induced his highness to sell him under pledge of Cuban banishment.

Barrah made several ineffectual attempts to break my *barracoön* and elude the watchfulness of my guards, so that they were frequently obliged to restrict his liberty, deprive him of comforts, or add to his shackles. In fact, he was one of the most formidable savages I ever encountered, even among the thousands who passed in terrible procession before me in Africa. One day he set fire to the bamboo-matting with which a portion of the *barracoön* was sheltered from the sun, for which he was severely lashed; but next day, when allowed, under pretence of ague, to crawl with his heavy irons to the kitchen fire, he suddenly dashed a brand into the thatch, and, seizing another, sprang towards the powder-house, which his heavy shackles did not allow him to reach before he was felled to the earth.

Freeman visited me soon afterwards, and, in spite of profit and liquor, insisted on taking the brutal savage back, but in the meantime, the Bassa chief, to whom my prince was subordinate, heard of Barrah's attempt on my magazine, and demanded the felon to expiate his crime, according to the law of his

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country, at the stake. No argument could appease the infuriate judges, who declared that a cruel death would alone satisfy the people whose lives had been endangered by the robber. Nevertheless, I declined delivering the victim for such a fate, so that, in the end, we compromised the sentence by shooting Barrah in the presence of all the slaves and townsfolk – the most unconcerned spectators among whom were his wife and sister!

## CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO



LANDING at New Sestros would be impracticable were it not for the dexterous Kroomen, whose canoes sever and surmount the billows in spite of their terrific power. As European or Yankee boats cannot live in the surf, the Kroo and Fishmen have an advantage over the whites, which they are not backward in using to their profit. In fact, the Kroos and Fishes, who for ages have fringed at least seven hundred miles of African coast, constitute the mariners, without whose skill and boldness slaves would be drugs in caravans or *barracoons*.

When I landed at New Sestros, I promptly supplied myself with a little fleet of these amphibious natives; and as the news of my liberality spread north and south along the shore, the number of my retainers increased with rapidity. Indeed, in six months a couple of rival towns – one of Kroos and the other of Fishes – hailed me severally as their ‘Commodore’ and ‘Consul.’ With such auxiliaries constantly at hand, I rarely feared the surf when the shipment of slaves was necessary. At Gallinas, under the immediate eye of Don Pedro, the most elaborate care was taken to secure an ample supply of these people and their boats, and I doubt not that the multitude employed in the establishment’s prime could, at a favourable moment, despatch at least a thousand slaves within the space of four hours. Yet I have heard from Kroomen at Gallinas the most harrowing tales of disaster connected with the shipment of negroes from that perilous bar. Even in the dry season, the mouth of this river is frequently dangerous, and, with all the adroitness they could display, the Kroos could not save boat-load after boat-load from becoming food for the ravenous sharks.

I was quite afloat at New Sestros on the tide of success when the cruiser that for a while had annoyed me with a blockade became short of food, and was obliged to bear away for Sierra Leone. My well-paid spy – a Krooman who had been employed by the cruiser – soon apprised me of the brig’s departure and

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its cause; so that in an hour the beach was in a bustle, despatching a swift canoe to Gallinas with a message to Don Pedro: 'The coast is clear; send me a vessel.'

Forty-eight hours were hardly over when the twin masts of a clipper brig were seen scraping along the edge of the horizon, with the well-known signal for 'embarkation.' I was prepared to welcome my guest, for Kroos, Fishes, Bushmen, Bassas and all had been alert since daybreak, ready to hail the craft and receive their fees. There had been a general embargo on all sea-going folks for a day before, so that there was not a fish to be had for love or money in the settlement. Minute precautions like these are absolutely necessary for all prudent slavers, for it was likely that the cruiser kept a spy in her pay among *my* people as well as I did among *hers*!

The moon was full, and the African surf at such periods is terrific. My watchful enemy had been several days absent, and I expected her return from hour to hour. The shipment, though extremely perilous, was, therefore, indispensable; and four short hours of daylight alone remained to complete it. I saw the risk, yet, taking counsel with the head Kroo and Fishmen, I persuaded them, under the provocation of triple reward, to attempt the enterprise with the smallest skiffs and stoutest rowers, while a band of youths stood by to plunge in whenever the breakers capsized a canoe.

We began with females, as the most difficult cargo for embarkation, and seventy reached the brig safely. Then followed the stronger sex; but by this time a sea breeze set in from the south-west like a young gale, and driving the rollers with greater rapidity, upset almost every alternate cockleshell set adrift with its living freight. It was fortunate that our sharks happened that evening to be on a frolic elsewhere, so that negro after negro was rescued from the brine, though the sun was rapidly sinking when but two-thirds of my slaves were safely shipped.

I ran up and down the beach, in a fever of anxiety, shouting, encouraging, coaxing, appealing, and *refreshing* the boatmen and swimmers; but as the gangs came ashore, they sank exhausted

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on the beach, refusing to stir. Rum, which hitherto roused them like electricity, was now powerless. Powder they did not want, nor muskets, nor ordinary trade stuff, for they never engaged in kidnapping or slave wars.

As night approached the wind increased. *There* was the brig with topsails aback, signalling impatiently; but I was on the eve of giving up in despair when a bright flash brought to recollection a quantity of Venetian beads of mock coral which I had stowed in my chest. They happened, at that moment, to be the rage among the girls of our beach, and were irresistible keys to the heart of every belle. Now the offer of a coral bunch for each head embarked, brought all the dames and damsels of Sestros to my aid, by coaxing or commanding their respective gentlemen; and, before the sun's rim dipped below the horizon, a few strands of false coral, or the kiss of a negro wench, sent one hundred more of the Africans into Spanish slavery.

But this effort exhausted my people. Three slaves found a tomb in the sharks, or in the deep, while the brig took flight in the darkness without the remaining one hundred and twenty I had designed for her hold.

Next morning the cruiser loomed once more in the offing.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE



ABOUT this time, a Spanish vessel from the Canaries, laden with fruit, the greater part of which had been sold at Goree, Sierra Leone, Gallinas, and Cape Mesurado, dropped anchor opposite my little roadstead with a letter from Blanco. The Spaniard had been chartered by the Don to bring from the Grain Coast a cargo of rice, which he was to collect under my instructions.

My *barracoons* happened to be just then pretty bare, and as the season did not require my presence in the factory for trade, it struck me that I could not pass a few weeks more agreeably than by purchasing the cargo myself.

In the prosecution of this little adventure, I called along the coast with cash at several English factories, where I obtained rice; and on my return anchored off the river to purchase sea-stores. Here I found Governor Findley, chief of the colony,<sup>1</sup> labouring under a protracted illness which refused yielding to medicine, but might probably be relieved by a voyage, even of a few days, in the pure air. Slaver as I was, I contrived never to omit a civility to gentlemen on the coast of Africa; and I confess I was proud of the honourable service, when Governor Findley accepted the *Brilliant* for a trip along the coast. He proposed visiting Monrovia and Bassa; and after landing at some port in that quarter to await the captain's return from windward.

I fanned along the coast as slowly as I could, to give the Governor every possible chance to recruit his enervated frame by change of air; but, as I looked in at New Sestros in passing, I found three trading vessels with cargoes of merchandise to my consignment, so that I was obliged to abandon my trip and return to business. I left the Governor, however, in excellent hands, and directed the captain to land him at Bassa, await his

<sup>1</sup> This Finley, a white American of the Mississippi Colonisation Society, was in charge of the small Liberian settlement at Sino; his name has been misspelt through a confusion with Findlay, the contemporary Governor of Sierra Leone - [EDITOR.]

## MEMOIRS OF A SLAVE-TRADER

pleasure three days, and finally, to bear him to Monrovia, the last place he desired visiting.

The Rio San Juan, or Grand Bassa, is only fourteen miles north-west of New Sestros, yet it was near nightfall when the *Brilliant* approached the river landing. The Spaniard advised his guest not to disembark till next morning, but the Governor was so restless and anxious about delay that he declined our captain's counsel, and went ashore at a native town with the design of crossing on foot the two miles of beach to the American settlement.

As Findley went over the *Brilliant's* side into the Krooman's canoe, the jingle of silver was heard in his pocket, and warning was given him either to hide his money or leave it on board. But the Governor smiled at the caution, and disregarding it entirely, threw himself into the African skiff.

Night fell. The curtain of darkness dropped over the coast and sea. Twice the sun rose and set without word from the Governor. At last, my delayed mariner became impatient if not anxious, and despatched one of my servants who spoke English, in search of Mr. Findley at the American Settlement. No one had seen or heard of him. But, hurrying homeward from his fruitless errand, my boy followed the winding beach, and half-way to the vessel found a human body, its head gashed with a deep wound, floating and beating against the rocks. He could not recognize the features of the battered face; but the well-remembered garments left no doubt in the servant's mind that the corpse was Findley's.

The frightful story was received with dismay on the *Brilliant*, whose captain, unfamiliar with the coast and its people, hesitated to land, with the risk of treachery or ambush, even to give a grave to his wretched passenger. In this dilemma he thought best to run the fourteen miles to New Sestros, where he might counsel with me before venturing ashore.

Whatever personal anxiety may have flashed athwart my mind when I heard of the death of a colonial governor while enjoying the hospitality of myself - a slaver - the thought

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vanished as quickly as it was conceived. In an instant I was busy with detection and revenge.

It happened that the three captains had already landed the cargoes to my consignment, so that their empty vessels were lying at anchor in the roads, and the officers ready to aid me in any enterprise I deemed feasible. My colleagues were from three nations: one was a Spaniard, another a Portuguese, and the last American.

Next morning I was early aboard the Spaniard, and sending for the Portuguese skipper, we assembled the crew. I dwelt earnestly and heartily on the insult the Castilian flag had received by the murder of an important personage while protected by its folds. I demonstrated the necessity there was for prompt chastisement of the brutal crime, and concluded by informing the crowd that their captains had resolved to aid me in vindicating our banner. When I ventured to hope that the men would not hesitate to back their officers, a general shout went up that they were ready to land and punish the negroes.

As soon as the enterprise was known on board the American, her captain insisted on volunteering in the expedition; and by noon our little squadron was under way, with fifty muskets in the cabins.

The plan I roughly proposed was, under the menacing appearance of this force, to demand the murderer or murderers of Governor Findley, and to execute them, either on his grave or the spot where his corpse was found. Failing in this, I intended to land portions of the crews, and destroy the towns nearest the theatre of the tragedy.

While I had been planning and executing these manœuvres, the colonial settlers had heard of the catastrophe, and found poor Findley's mangled corpse. At the moment of our arrival off the river's mouth, an anxious council of resolute men was discussing the best means of chastising the savages. When my servant inquired for the governor he had spoken of him as a passenger in the Spanish craft, so that the parade of our vessels alongshore and in front of the native towns betokened, they

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thought, co-operation on the part of the Mongo of New Sestros.

Accordingly, we had not been long at anchor before Governor Johnson despatched a Krooman to know whether I was aboard a friendly squadron; and, if so, he trusted I would land at once, and unite with his forces in the intended punishment.

In the interval, however, the cunning savages, who soon found out that we had no cannons, flocked to the beach, and as they were beyond musket shot, insulted us by gestures, and defied a battle.

Of course no movement was made against the blacks that night, but it was agreed in council at the American settlement, that the expedition, supported by a field piece, should advance next day by the beach, where I could reinforce it with my seamen a short distance from the towns.

Punctual to the moment, the colonial flag, with drum and fife, appeared on the sea-shore at nine in the morning, followed by some forty armed men, dragging their cannon. Five boats filled with sailors instantly left our vessels to support the attack, and, by this time, the colonists had reached a massive rock which blocked the beach like a bulwark, and was already possessed by the natives. My position, in flank, made my force most valuable in dislodging the foe, and of course I hastened my oars to open the passage. As I was altogether ignorant of the numbers that might be hidden and lurking in the dense jungle that was not more than fifty feet from the water's edge, I kept my men afloat within musket shot, and with a few rounds of ball cartridge purged the rock of its defenders, though but a single savage was mortally wounded.

Upon this the colonists advanced to the vacant bulwark, and were joined by our reinforcement. Wheeler, who commanded the Americans, proposed that we should march in a compact body to the towns, and give battle to the blacks if they held out in their dwellings. But his plan was not executed, for, before we reached the negro huts, we were assailed from the bushes and jungle. Their object was to keep hidden within the dense underwood; to shoot and run; while we, entirely exposed on

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the open shore, were obliged to remain altogether on the defensive by dodging the balls, or to fire at the smoke of an unseen enemy. Occasionally, large numbers of the savages would appear at a distance beyond musket range, and tossing their guns and lances, or brandishing their cutlasses, would present their naked limbs to our gaze, slap their shining flanks, and disappear! But this diverting exercise was not repeated very often. A sturdy colonist, named Bear, who carried a long and heavy old-fashioned rifle, took rest on my shoulder, and, when the next party of annoying jokers displayed their personal charms, laid its leader in the dust by a Yankee ball. Our cannon and blunderbusses were next brought into play to scour the jungle and expel the marksmen, who, confident in the security of their impervious screen, began to fire among us with more precision than was desirable. A Krooman of our party was killed, and a colonist severely wounded. Small sections of our two commands advanced at a run, and fired a volley into the bushes, while the main body of the expedition hastened along the beach towards the towns. By repeating this process several times we were enabled, without further loss, to reach the first settlement.

Here, of course, we expected to find the savages arrayed in force to defend their roof-trees, but when we entered the place cautiously, and crept to the first dwelling in the outskirt, it was empty. So with the second, third, fourth – until we overran the whole settlement and found it utterly deserted – its furniture, stock, implements, and even *doors* carried off by the deliberate fugitives. The guardian *fetiche* was alone left to protect their abandoned hovels. But the superstitious charm did not save them. The brand was lighted; and, in an hour, five of these bamboo confederacies were given to the flames.

We discovered while approaching the towns that our assault had made so serious an inroad on the slim supply of ammunition, that it was deemed advisable to send a messenger to the colony for a reinforcement. By neglect or mishap, the powder and ball never reached us; so that when the towns were

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destroyed, no one dreamed of penetrating the forest to unearth its vermin with the remnant of cartridges in our chest and boxes. I never was able to discover the cause of this unpardonable neglect, or the officer who permitted it to occur in such an exigency; but it was forthwith deemed advisable to waste no time in retreating after our partial revenge.

Till now, the Africans had kept strictly on the defensive, but when they saw our faces turned towards the beach, or colony, every bush and thicket became alive again with aggressive foes. For a while, the cannon kept them at bay, but its grape soon gave out; and while I was in the act of superintending a fair division of the remaining ball cartridges, I was shot in the right foot with an iron slug. At the moment of injury I scarcely felt the wound, and did not halt, but as I trudged along in the sand and salt water my wound grew painful, and the loss of blood which tracked my steps soon obliged me to seek refuge in the canoe of my Kroomen.

The sight of my bleeding body borne to the skiff was hailed with shouts and gestures of joy and contempt by the savages. As I crossed the last breaker and dropped into smooth water my eyes reverted to the beach, where I heard the exultant war drum and war bells, while the colonists were beheld in full flight, leaving their artillery in the hands of our foe! It was subsequently reported that the commander of the party had been panic struck by the perilous aspect of affairs, and ordered the precipitate and fatal retreat, which that very night emboldened the negroes to revenge the loss of their towns by the conflagration of Bassa-Cove.

Next day, my own men, and the volunteers from our Spanish, Portuguese and American vessels, were sent on board, eight of them bearing marks of the fray, which fortunately proved neither fatal nor dangerous. The shameful flight of my comrades not only gave heart to the blacks, but spread its cowardly panic among the resident colonists. The settlement, they told me, was in danger of attack, and although my wound and the disaster both contributed to excite me against the fugitives, I did not quit the *San Juan* without reinforcing

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Governor Johnson with twenty muskets and some kegs of powder.

I have dwelt rather tediously perhaps on this sad occurrence – but I have a reason. Governor Findley's memory was, at this time, much vilified on the coast, because that functionary had accepted the boon of a passage in the *Brilliant*, which was falsely declared to be 'a Spanish slaver.' There were some among the over-righteous who even went so far as to proclaim his death 'a judgment for venturing on the deck of such a vessel.'

I took the earliest opportunity to apprise Don Pedro Blanco of the mishap that had befallen his factor's limb, so that I might receive the prompt aid of an additional clerk to attend the more active part of our business. Don Pedro's answer was extremely characteristic. The letter opened with a draft for five hundred dollars, which he authorized me to bestow on the widow and orphans of Governor Findley, if he left a family. The slaver of Gallinas then, in gentle terms, intimated a decided censure for my immature attempt to chastise the negroes. He did not disapprove my *motives*; but considered any revengeful assault on the natives unwise, unless every precaution had previously been taken to ensure complete success. Don Pedro hoped that, henceforth, I would take things more coolly, so as not to hazard either my life or his property: and concluded the epistle by superscribing it:

'Tc

'Señor POWDER,

'at his Magazine,

'NEW SESTROS.'

The slug that struck the upper part of my foot, near the ankle joint, tore my flesh and tendons with a painfully dangerous wound, which, for nine months, kept me a prisoner on crutches. During the long and wearying confinement which almost broke my restless heart, I had little to do save to superintend the general fortunes of our factory. Now and then an incident

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occurred to relieve the monotony of my sick chair, and make me forget, for a moment, the pangs of my crippled limb. One of these events flashes across my memory as I write, in the shape of a letter which was mysteriously delivered at my landing by a coaster, and came from poor Joseph, my ancient partner on the Rio Pongo. The ungrateful scamp, though forgetful of my own appeals from Brest, did not hesitate to claim my aid. Captured in a Spanish slaver, and compromised beyond salvation, Joseph had been taken into Sierra Leone, where he was now under sentence of transportation. The letter hinted that a liberal sum might purchase his escape; and when I thought of old times I forgave his neglect. A draft on Don Pedro was readily cashed at Sierra Leone, notwithstanding the paymaster was a slaver; so that, in less than a month, Joseph and the bribed turnkey were on their way to the Rio Pongo.

By this time the sub-factory of New Sestros was somewhat renowned in Cuba and Porto Rico. Our dealings with commanders, the character of my cargoes, and the rapidity with which I despatched a customer and his craft were proverbial in the islands. Indeed, the third year of my lodgment had not rolled over before the slave-demand was so great, that in spite of rum, cottons, muskets, powder, kidnapping and Prince Freeman's wars, the country could not supply our demand.

To aid New Sestros, I had established several *nurseries*, or junior factories, at Little Bassa and Digby; points a few miles from the limits of Liberia. These 'chapels of ease' furnished my parent *barracoons* with young and small negroes, mostly kidnapped, I suppose, in the neighbourhood of the beach.

When I was perfectly cured of the injury I sustained in my first philanthropic fight, I loaded my spacious cutter with a choice collection of trade-goods, and set sail one fine morning for this outpost at Digby. I designed, also, if advisable, to erect another receiving *barracoon* under the lee of Cape Mount.

But my call at Digby was unsatisfactory. The pens were vacant, and our merchandise squandered *on credit*; so I refused landing a single yard of merchandise, and hoisted sail for the next village.

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There, in five days, nineteen darkies were exchanged for London muskets, Yankee grog, and Manchester cottons.

My cutter, though but twenty-seven feet long, was large enough to stow my gang, considering that the voyage was short, and the slaves but boys and girls; so I turned my prow homeward with contented spirit and promising skies. Yet, before night, all was changed. Wind and sea rose together. The sun sank in a long streak of blood. After a while it rained in terrible squalls till, finally, darkness caught me in a perfect gale. So high was the surf and so shelterless the coast that it became utterly impossible to make a lee of any headland where we might ride out the storm in safety. Our best hope was in the cutter's ability to keep the open sea without swamping; and, accordingly, under the merest patch of sail, I coasted the perilous breakers, guided by their roar, till day dawn. But when the sun lifted over the horizon – peering for an instant through a rent in the storm-cloud, and then disappearing behind the grey vapour – I saw at once that the coast offered no chance of landing our blacks at some friendly town. Everywhere the bellowing shore was lashed by surf, impracticable even for the boats and skill of Kroomen. On I dashed, therefore, driving and almost burying the cutter, with loosened reef, till we came opposite Monrovia; where, safe in the absence of cruisers, I crept at dark under the lee of the cape, veiling my cargo with our useless sails.

Sunset 'killed the wind,' enabling us to be off again at dawn; yet hardly were we clear of the cape, when both gale and current freshened from the old quarter, holding us completely in check. Nevertheless, I kept at sea till evening, and then sneaked back to my protecting anchorage.

By this time my people and slaves were well-nigh famished, for their sole food had been a scant allowance of raw *cassava*. Anxiety, toil, rain, and drenching spray broke their spirits. The blacks, from the hot interior, and now for the first time off their mother earth, suffered not only from the inclement weather, but groaned with the terrible pangs of sea-sickness. I resolved, therefore, if possible, to refresh the drooping gang

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by a hot meal; and, beneath the shelter of a tarpaulin, contrived to cook a mess of rice. Warm food comforted us astonishingly; but, alas! the next day was a picture of the past! A slave – cramped and smothered amid the crowd that soaked so long in the salt water at our boat's bottom – died during the darkness. Next morning, the same low, leaden, coffin-lid sky hung like a pall over sea and shore. Wind in terrific blasts, and rain in deluging squalls, howled and beat on us. Come what might, I resolved not to stir! All day I kept my people beneath the sails, with orders to move their limbs as much as possible, in order to overcome the benumbing effect of moisture and packed confinement. The incessant drenching from sea and sky to which they had been so long subjected, chilled their slackened circulation to such a degree that death from torpor seemed rapidly supervening. Motion, motion, motion was my constant command; but I hoarded my alcohol for the last resource.

I saw that no time was to be lost, and that nothing but a bold encounter of hazard would save either lives or property. Before dark my mind was made up as to the enterprise. I would land in the neighbourhood of the colony, and cross its territory during the shadow of night!

I threw my stiffened crew on the beach, and revived them with copious draughts of brandy; midnight did not strike before my cargo, under the escort of Kroo guides, was boldly marched through the colonial town, and safe on its way to New Sestros. Fortunately for my dare-devil adventure, the tropical rain poured down in ceaseless torrents, compelling the unsuspecting colonists to keep beneath their roofs. Indeed, no one dreamed of a forced march by human beings on that dreadful night of tempest, else it might have gone hard had I been detected in the desecration of colonial soil. Still, I was prepared for all emergencies. I never went abroad without the two great keys of Africa – gold and firearms; and had it been my lot to encounter a colonist, he would either have learned the value of silence or have been carried along, under the muzzle of a pistol, till the gang was in safety.

While it was still dark, I left the caravan advancing by an

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interior path to Little Bassa, where one of my branches could furnish it with necessaries to cross the other colony of Bassa San Juan, so as to reach my homestead in the course of three days. Meanwhile I retraced my way to Monrovia, and, reaching it by sunrise, satisfied the colonists that I had just taken shelter in their harbour, and was fresh from my dripping cutter. It is very likely that no one in the colony to the present day knows the story of this adventure.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

It was my custom whenever a vessel made her appearance in the roadstead of New Sestros, to despatch my canoe with 'Captain Canot's compliments'; nor did I omit this courtesy when His Britannic Majesty's cruisers did me the honour of halting to watch or destroy my operations. At such times I commonly increased the politeness by an offer of provisions, or of any commodity the country could supply!

I remember an interesting rencounter of this sort with the officers of the brig-of-war *Bonito*. My note was forwarded by a trusty Krooman, even before her sails were furled, but the courteous offer was respectfully declined 'for the present.' The captain availed himself, however, of my messenger's return, to announce that the commodore in command of the African squadron had specially deputed the *Bonito* to blockade New Sestros, for which purpose she was provisioned for *six months*, and ordered not to budge from her anchorage till relieved by a cruiser.

The captain hoped in conclusion, that I would see the folly of prosecuting my abominable traffic in the face of such a disastrous *vis à vis*; nor could he refrain from intimating his surprise that a man of my reputed character and ability would consent to manacle and starve the unfortunate negroes who were now suffering in my *barracoons*.

I saw at once from this combined attack of fear and flattery, backed by blockade, that His Majesty's officer had either been grossly misinformed or believed that a scarcity of rice prevailed in my establishment as well as elsewhere along the coast.

The suspicion of starving blacks in chains was mortifying. It was part of the sentimental drapery of British reports and despatches, to which I became accustomed in Africa. I resolved not to let official communications reach the British Admiralty with a fanciful tale about my *barracoons* and starvation. Accordingly, I sent to the *Bonito*, desiring her captain or any of her officers to visit New Sestros, and ascertain personally the condition of my establishment.

## MEMOIRS OF A SLAVE-TRADER

Strange to tell, my invitation was accepted; and at noon a boat with a white flag appeared on the edge of the surf, conveying the surgeon and first lieutenant.

There must have been at least five hundred slaves in my two pens, sleek in flesh, happy in looks, and ready for the first customer who could outwit the cruiser. I quietly despatched a notice of our advent to the *barracooniers*, with directions as to their conduct, so that the moment my naval friends entered the staunch enclosures, full two hundred and fifty human beings, in each, rose to their feet and saluted the strangers with long and reiterated clapping. This sudden and surprising demonstration somewhat alarmed my guests at its outburst, and made them retreat a pace towards the door – perhaps in fear of treachery – but when they saw the smiling faces and heard the pleased chatter of my people, they soon came forward to learn that the compliment was worth a customary demijohn of rum.

The adventure was a fortunate one for the reputation of New Sestros, Don Pedro my employer, and his clerk. Our establishment happened just then to be at a summit of material comfort rarely exceeded or even reached by others. My pens were full of slaves; my granary, of rice; my stores, of merchandise.

From house to house – from hut to hut – the sailor and saw-bones wandered with expressions of perfect admiration till the hour for dinner approached. I ordered the meal to be administered with minute attention to all our usual ceremonies. The washing, singing, distribution of food, beating time, and all the prandial *etceteras* of comfort were performed with the utmost precision and cleanliness. They could not believe that such was the ordinary routine of slave life in *barracoons*, but ventured to hint that I must have got up the drama for their special diversion, and that it was impossible for such to be the ordinary drill and demeanour of Africans. Our dapper little surgeon, with almost dissective inquisitiveness, pried into every nook and corner; and at length reached the slave kitchen, where a caldron was full and bubbling with the most delicious rice. Hard by

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stood a pot, simmering with meat and soup, and in an instant the doctor had a morsel between his fingers and brought his companion to follow his example.

Now, in sober truth, this was no casual display got up for effect, but the common routine of an establishment conducted with prudent foresight, for the profit of its owners as well as the comfort of our people. And yet, such was the fanatical prepossession of these Englishmen, whose idea of Spanish *barracoons* was formed from exaggerated reports, that I could not satisfy them of my truth till I produced our journal, in which I noted minutely every item of daily expenditure. It must be understood, however, that it was not my habit to give the slaves meat every day of the week. Such a diet would not be prudent, because it is not habitual with the majority of negroes. Two bullocks were slaughtered each week for the use of my *factory*, while the hide, head, blood, feet, neck, tail, and entrails were appropriated for broth in the *barracoons*. It happened that my visitors arrived on the customary day of our butchering.

Our friends of the *Bonito* held on with provoking pertinacity in front of my factory, so that I was troubled but little with company from Cuba for several months. At last, however, it became necessary that I should visit a neighbouring colony for supplies, and I took advantage of a Russian trader along the coast to effect my purpose. But when we were within sight of our destination a British cruiser brought us to and visited the *Galopsik*. As her papers were in order, and the vessel altogether untainted, I took it for granted that Lieutenant Hill would make a short stay and be off to his *Saracen*. Yet, a certain 'slave deck,' and an unusual quantity of water-casks, aroused the officer's suspicions, so that instead of heading for our port, we were unceremoniously favoured with a prize crew, and ordered to Sierra Leone!

I did not venture to protest against these movements, inasmuch as I had no interest whatever in the craft, but I ventured to suggest that as I was only a passenger, there could be no

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objection to my landing before the new voyage was commenced.

'By no means, sir,' was the prompt reply. 'your presence is a material fact for the condemnation of the vessel.' Indeed, I soon found out that I was recognized by some of the Kroomen on the cruiser, and my unlucky reputation was a hole in the bottom of our Russian craft!

At Sierra Leone matters became worse. The court did not venture to condemn the Russian, but resolved on ordering her to England; and when I re-stated my reasonable appeal for release, I was told that I must accompany the vessel on her visit to Great Britain.

This arbitrary decision of our captors sadly disconcerted my plans. A voyage to England would ruin New Sestros. My *barracoons* were alive with blacks, but I had not a month's provisions in my stores. The clerk, temporarily in charge, was altogether unfit to conduct a factory during a prolonged absence, and all my personal property, as well as Don Pedro's, was at the hazard of his judgment during a period of considerable difficulty.

Three men-of-war were anchored astern and on our bows. No boats were allowed to approach us from shore; at night two marines and four sailors paraded the deck, so that it was a thing of some peril to dream of escape. Yet there was no help for it. I could not afford an Admiralty or Chancery suit in England, while my *barracoons* were foodless in Africa.

No one had been removed from the Russian since her seizure, nor were we denied liberty of motion and intercourse so long as suspicion had not ripened into legal condemnation. The captain, by birth a Spaniard, was an old acquaintance, while the steward and boatswain were good fellows who professed willingness to aid me in any exploit I might devise for my liberty.

I hit upon the plan of a regular carouse; and at once decided that my Spanish skipper was bound to keep his birthday with commendable merriment and abundant grog. There was to be no delay; one day was as good as another for his festival, while

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all that we needed was time enough to obtain the requisite supplies of food and fluid.

Everything went off to a charm. We fed like gluttons and drank like old-fashioned squires. The 'first watch' found every soul on board, with the exception of our corporal of marines, as happy as lords.

'God bless me, corporal,' said our prize lieutenant, 'in the name of all that's damnable, why don't you let out a reef or two from those solemn cheeks of yours, and drink a bumper to Captain Gaspard and Don Téodore? You ain't afraid of *cider*, are you?'

'*Cider*, captain?' said the corporal, advancing to the front and throwing up his hand with a military salute.

'*Cider* and be d - d to you!' returned the lieutenant. '*Cider* - of course, corporal; what other sort of pop can starving wretches like us drink in Sary-loney?'

'Well, lieutenant,' said the corporal, 'if so be as how them fizzing bottles which yonder Spanish gentleman is a pourin' down is *only cider*; and if *cider* ain't agin rules after "eight bells"; and if you, lieutenant, orders me to handle my glass, I don't see what right I have to disobey the orders of my superior!'

'Oh! blast your sermon and provisos,' interjected the lieutenant, filling a tumbler of champagne, in the apple-blossom disguise of '*cider*'; and in half an hour there wasn't a sober man on deck or in the cabin except myself and the Spanish captain, who left me to engage the prize officer in a game of backgammon or dominoes. The crew was dozing about the decks, or nodding over the taffrail, while my colleague, the boatswain, prepared an oar on the forecastle to assist me in reaching the beach.

It was near midnight when I stripped in my state-room, leaving my garments in the berth, and hanging my watch over its pillow. In a small bundle I tied a flannel shirt and a pair of duck pantaloons, which I fastened behind my neck as I stood on the forecastle; and then, placing the oar beneath my arm, I glided from the bows into the quiet water.

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The night was not only very dark, but a heavy squall of wind and rain, accompanied by thunder, helped to conceal my escape and free the stream from sharks. I was not long in reaching a native town, where a Krooman from below, who had known me at Gallinas, was prepared for my reception and concealment.

Next morning the cabin-boy, who did not find me as usual on deck, took my coffee to the state-room, where it was supposed I still rested in comfortable oblivion of last night's carouse. But the bird had flown! There were my trunk, my garments, my watch, undisturbed as I left them when preparing for bed. There was the linen of my couch turned down and tumbled during repose. The inquest had no doubt of my fate - I had fallen overboard during the night, and was doubtless, by this time, in the bowels of sharks!

During eight days I remained hidden among the friendly negroes, and from my loop-hole, saw the Russian vessel sail under the *Saracen's* escort. I was not, however, neglected in my concealment by the worthy tradesmen of the British colony, who knew I possessed money as well as credit. This permitted me to receive visits and make purchases for the factory, so that I was enabled, on the eighth day, with a full equipment of all I desired, to quit the British jurisdiction in a Portuguese vessel.

On our way to New Sestros, I made the skipper heave his main-yard aback at Digby, while I embarked thirty-one 'darkies,' and a couple of staunch canoes with their Kroomen, to land my human freight in case of encountering a cruiser.

And well was it for me that I took this precaution. Night fell around us, dark and rainy, the wind blowing in squalls, and sometimes dying away altogether. It was near one o'clock when the watch announced two vessels on our weather bow; and, of course, the canoes were launched, manned, filled with twenty of the gang, and set adrift for the coast, ere our new acquaintances could honour us with their personal attention. Ten of the slaves still remained on board, and as it was perilous to risk them in our own launch, we capsized it over the squad, burying the fellows in its bowels under the lee of a sailor's pistol to keep them quiet if we were searched.

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Our lights had hardly been extinguished in cabin and binnacle when we heard the measured stroke of a man-of-war oar. In a few moments more the boat was alongside, the officer on deck, and a fruitless examination concluded. The blacks beneath the launch were as silent as death; nothing was found to render the *Maria* suspicious; and we were dismissed. Next morning at dawn we reached New Sestros, where my ten lubbers were landed without delay.

But noon had not struck before the *Dolphin* cast anchor within hail of the *Maria*, and made so free as to claim her for a prize. In the darkness and confusion of shipping the twenty slaves who were first of all despatched in canoes, one of them slipped overboard with a paddle, and sustained himself till daylight, when he was picked up by the cruiser whose jaws we had escaped during the night! The negro's story of our trick aroused the ire of her commander, and the poor *Maria* was obliged to pay the forfeit by revisiting Sierra Leone in custody of an officer.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

It was my habit to employ at New Sestros a clerk, storekeeper, and four seamen, all of whom were whites of reliable character, competent to aid me efficiently in the control of my *barracoons*.

One of these sailors died of dropsy while in my service; and, as I write, the memory of his death flashes across my mind so vividly that I cannot help recording it among the characteristic events of African coast-life.

Sanchez, I think, was by birth a Spaniard. The poor fellow was ill for a long time, but in Africa existence is so much a long-drawn malady that we hardly heeded his bloated flesh or cadaverous skin, as he sat, day after day, musket in hand, at the gate of our barracoon. At last, however, his confinement to bed was announced, and every remedy within our knowledge applied for relief.

On the morning of his death, the sufferer desired me to be called, and, sending away the African nurse and the two old comrades who watched faithfully at his bedside, explained that he felt his end approaching, yet could not depart without easing his soul by confession.

'Here, Don Téodore,' said he, 'are five ounces of gold – all I have saved in this world – the lees of my life – which I want you to take care of, and when I am dead send to my sister, who is married to – –, in Matanzas. Will you promise?'

I promised.

'And now, Don Téodore,' continued he, 'I must confess.'

I could not repress a smile as I replied: 'But, José, I am no *padre*; I cannot absolve your sins.'

'It's all one,' answered the dying man. 'When confession is over, a man's soul is easier under canvas, even if there's no regular *padre* at hand to loosen the ropes, and let one's sins fly to the four winds of heaven. Listen, it will be short.'

'It is many years since I sailed from Havana with that notorious slaver, Miguel – –, whose murder you may have heard of on the coast. Our vessel was in capital order for speed as well as cargo, and we reached Cape Mount after a quick

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voyage. The place, however, was so bare of slaves that we coasted the reefs till we learned from a Mesurado Krooman that, in less than a month, the supply at Little Bassa would be abundant. We shipped the savage with his boatman, and next day reached our destination.

‘Miguel was welcomed warmly by the chiefs, who offered a choice lot of negroes for a portion of our cargo, inviting the captain to tarry with the rest of his merchandise and establish a factory. He assented; our brig was sent home with a short cargo, while I and two others landed with the captain, to aid in the erection and defence of the requisite buildings.

‘It did not take long to set up our bamboo houses and open a trade, for whose supply Miguel began an intercourse with Cape Mesurado, paying in doubloons and receiving his merchandise in vessels manned by American blacks.

‘Our captain was no niggard in housekeeping. Bountiful meals every day supplied his friends and factory. No man went from his door hungry or dissatisfied. When the colonists came up in their boats with goods, or walked the beach from the Cape to our settlement, Miguel was always alert with a welcome. A great intimacy, of course, ensued; and, among the whole crowd of traffickers, none were higher in our chief’s estimation than a certain T – , who rarely visited the *barracoons* without a gift from Miguel, in addition to his stipulated pay.

‘In due time the brig returned from Havana, with a cargo of rum, tobacco, powder, and a box of doubloons; but she was ordered to the Cape de Verds to change her flag. In the interval, the Mesurado colonists picked a quarrel with the Trade-Town chiefs, and, aided by an American vessel, under Colombian colours, landed a division of colonial troops and destroyed the Spanish *barracoons*.

‘The ruin of a Spanish factory could not be regarded by our captain with any other feeling than that of resentment. Still, he manifested his sensibility by coolness towards the colonists, or by refraining from that *profitable* welcome to which they had hitherto been accustomed. But the Monroviaans were not to be rebuffed by disdain. They had heard, I suppose, of the box of

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doubloons, and Miguel was "a good fellow," in spite of his frigidity. They were his friends for ever, and all the harm that had been done his countrymen was attributable alone to their Colombian foes, and not to the colonists. Such were the constant declarations of the Monrovia's, as they came, singly and in squads, to visit us after the Trade-Town plunder. T -- , in particular, was loud in his protestations of regard; and such was the earnestness of his manner that Miguel, by degrees, restored him to confidence.

'Thus, for a while, all things went smoothly till T -- reached our anchorage, with several passengers in his craft, bound, as they said, to Grand Bassa. As usual on such visits, the whole party dined with Miguel at four in the afternoon, and, at six, retired towards their vessel, with a gift of provisions and liquor for their voyage.

'About eight o'clock a knocking at our gates - closed invariably at dark, according to custom - gave notice that our recent guests had returned. They craved hospitality for the night. They had dallied a couple of hours on the beach, with the hope of getting off, but the surf was so perilous that no Kroomen would venture to convey them through the breakers.

'Such an appeal was, of course, enough for the heart of a courteous Spaniard, and on the coast, you know, it is imperative. Miguel opened the door, and, in an instant, fell dead on the threshold, with a ball in his skull. Several guns were discharged, and the house filled with colonists. At the moment of attack, I was busy in the *barracoon*; but as soon as I came forth, the assailants approached in such numbers that I leaped the barriers and hid myself in the forest till discovered by some friendly natives.

'I remained with these Africans several weeks, while a canoe was summoned from Gallinas for my rescue. From thence I sailed to Cuba, and was the first to apprise our owners of the piratical onslaught by which the factory had been destroyed.

'After this, I made several successful voyages to the coast; and, at last, sauntering one evening along the *paséo* at Havana, I met Don Miguel's brother, who, after a sorrowful chat about

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the tragedy, offered me a quarter-master's berth in a brig he was fitting out for Africa. It was accepted on the spot.

'In a month we were off Mesurado, and cruised for several days from the Cape to Grand Bassa, avoiding every square-rigged vessel that loomed above the horizon. At length, we espied a small craft beating down the coast. We bore the stranger company for several hours, till, suddenly taking advantage of her long tack out to sea, we gave chase and cut off her return towards land

'It was a fine afternoon, and the sun was yet an hour in the sky when we intercepted the schooner. As we ran alongside, I thought I recognized the faces of several who, in days of old, were familiar in our factory, but what was my surprise, when T - - himself came to the gangway, and hailed us in Spanish!

'I pointed out the miscreant to my comrade, and, in an instant, he was in our clutches. We let the sun go down before we contrived a proper death for the felon. His five companions, double-ironed, were nailed beneath the hatches in the hold. After this, we riveted the murderer, in chains, to the mainmast, and, for better security, fastened his spread arms to the deck by spikes through his hands. Every sail was then set on the craft, two barrels of tar were poured over the planks, and a brand was thrown in the midst of the combustible materials. For a while, the schooner was held by a hawser till we saw the flames spread from stern to cut-water, and then, with a cheer, *adios!* It was a beautiful sight, that *auto-da-fé* on the sea, in the darkness!

'From that day, I have never been within a church or alongside a *padre*; but I could not die without sending the gold to my sister, and begging a mass in some parish for the rest of my soul!

I felt very conscious that I was by no means the person to afford ghostly consolation to a dying man under such circumstances, but while I promised to fulfil his request carefully, I could not help inquiring whether he sincerely repented these atrocious deeds?

'Ah! yes, Don Téodor, a thousand times! Many a night,

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when alone on my watch at sea, or in yonder stockade, marching up and down before the *barracoon*, I have wept like a child for the innocent crew of that little schooner; but, as for the murderer of *Don Miguel* -! He stared wildly for a minute into my eyes - shuddered - fell back - was dead!

I have no doubt the outlaw's story contained exaggerations, or fell from a wrecked mind that was drifting into eternity on the current of delirium. I cannot credit his charge against the Monrovia colonists; yet I recount the narrative as an illustration of many a bloody scene that has stained the borders of Africa.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX



DURING my first visit to Digby, I promised my trading friends – perhaps rather rashly – that I would either return to their settlement or, at least, send merchandise and a clerk to establish a factory. This was joyous news for the traffickers, and, accordingly, I embraced an early occasion to despatch, in charge of a clever young sailor, such stuffs as would be likely to tickle the negro taste.

There were two towns at Digby, governed by cousins who had always lived in harmony. My mercantile venture, however, was unhappily destined to be the apple of discord between these relatives. The establishment of so important an institution as a slave-factory within the jurisdiction of the younger savage gave umbrage to the elder. His town could boast neither of ‘merchandise’ nor a ‘white man’; there was no profitable tax to be levied from foreign traffic; and, in a very short time, this unlucky partiality ripened the noble kinsmen into bitter enemies.

It is not the habit in Africa for negroes to expend their wrath in harmless words, so that preparations were soon made in each settlement for defence as well as hostility. Both towns were stockaded and carefully watched by sentinels, day and night. At times, forays were made into each other’s suburbs, but as the chiefs were equally vigilant and alert, the extent of harm was the occasional capture of women or children, as they wandered to the forest and stream for wood and water.

This dalliance, however, did not suit the ardour of my angry favourite. After wasting a couple of months, he purchased the aid of certain *bushmen*, headed by a notorious scoundrel named Jen-ken, who had acquired renown for his barbarous ferocity throughout the neighbourhood. Jen-ken and his chiefs were *cannibals*, and never trod the war-path without a pledge to return laden with human flesh to gorge their households.

Several assaults were made by this savage and his *bushmen* on the dissatisfied cousin, but as they produced no significant results, the barbarians withdrew to the interior. A truce

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ensued. Friendly proposals were made by the younger to the elder, and again, a couple of months glided by in seeming peace.

Just at this time business called me to Gallinas. On my way thither I looked in at Digby, intending to supply the displeased chieftain with goods and an agent if I found the establishment profitable.

It was sunset when I reached the beach; too late, of course, to land my merchandise, so that I postponed furnishing both places until the morning. As might fairly be expected, there was abundant joy at my advent. The neglected rival was wild with satisfaction at the report that he, too, at length was favoured with a 'white-man.' His 'town' immediately became a scene of unbounded merriment. Powder was burnt without stint. Gallons of rum were distributed to both sexes; and dancing, smoking and carousing continued till long after midnight, when all stole off to maudlin sleep.

About three in the morning, the sudden screams of women and children aroused me from profound torpor! Shrieks were followed by volleys of musketry. Then came a loud tattoo of knocks at my door, and appeals from the negro chief to rise and fly. 'The town was besieged: the head-men were on the point of escaping: resistance was vain: they had been betrayed: there were no fighters to defend the stockade!'

I was opening the door to comply with this advice when my Kroomen, who knew the country's ways even better than I, dissuaded me from departing, with the confident assurance that our assailants were unquestionably composed of the rival townsfolk, who had only temporarily discharged the bushmen to deceive my entertainer. The Kroos insisted that I had nothing to fear. We might, they said, be seized and even imprisoned; but after a brief detention, the captors would be glad enough to accept our ransom. If we fled, we might be slaughtered by mistake.

I had so much confidence in the sense and fidelity of the band that always accompanied me – partly as boatmen and partly as bodyguard – that I experienced very little personal alarm when I heard the shouts as the savages rushed through

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the town murdering everyone they encountered. In a few moments our own door was battered down by the barbarians, and Jen-ken, torch in hand, made his appearance, claiming us as prisoners.

Of course, we submitted without resistance, for although fully armed, the odds were so great in those ante-revolver days that we would have been overwhelmed by a single wave of the infuriated crowd. The barbarian chief instantly selected our house for his headquarters, and despatched his followers to complete their task. Prisoner after prisoner was thrust in. At times the heavy mash of a war club and the cry of strangling women gave notice that the work of death was not yet ended. But the night of horror wore away. The grey dawn crept through our hovel's bars, and all was still save the groans of wounded captives and the wailing of women and children.

By degrees, the warriors dropped in around their chieftain. A *palaver-house*, immediately in front of my quarters, was the general rendezvous; and scarcely a *bushman* appeared without the body of some maimed and bleeding victim. The mangled but living captives were tumbled on a heap in the centre, and soon every avenue to the square was crowded with exulting savages. Rum was brought forth in abundance for the chiefs. Presently, slowly approaching from a distance, I heard the drums, horns, and war-bells; and, in less than fifteen minutes, a procession of women, whose naked limbs were smeared with chalk and ochre, poured into the palaver-house to join the beastly rites. Each of these devils was armed with a knife, and bore in her hand some cannibal trophy. Jen-ken's wife – a corpulent wench of forty-five – dragged along the ground, by a single limb, the slimy corpse of an infant ripped alive from its mother's womb. As her eyes met those of her husband, the two fiends yelled forth a shout of mutual joy, while the lifeless babe was tossed in the air and caught as it descended on the point of a spear. Then came the *refreshment*, in the shape of rum, powder, and blood, which was quaffed by the brutes till they reeled off, with linked hands, in a wild dance around the pile of victims. As the women leaped and sang,

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the men applauded and encouraged. Soon the ring was broken, and, with a yell, each female leaped on the body of a wounded prisoner and commenced the final sacrifice with the mockery of lascivious embraces!

In my wanderings in African forests I have often seen the tiger pounce upon its prey, and, with instinctive thirst, satiate its appetite for blood and abandon the drained corpse; but these African negresses were neither as decent nor as merciful as the beast of the wilderness. Their malignant pleasure seemed to consist in the invention of tortures that would agonize but not slay. There was a devilish spell in the tragic scene that fascinated my eyes to the spot. A slow, lingering, tormenting mutilation was practised on the living, as well as on the dead; and, in every instance, the brutality of the women exceeded that of the men. I cannot picture the hellish joy with which they passed from body to body, digging out eyes, wrenching off lips, tearing the ears, and slicing the flesh from the quivering bones; while the queen of the harpies crept amid the butchery gathering the brains from each severed skull as a *bonne bouche* for the approaching feast!

After the last victim yielded his life, it did not require long to kindle a fire, produce the requisite utensils, and fill the air with the odour of *human flesh*. Yet, before the various messes were half broiled, every mouth was tearing the dainty morsels with shouts of joy, denoting the combined satisfaction of revenge and appetite! In the midst of this appalling scene, I heard a fresh cry of exultation, as a pole was borne into the apartment, on which was impaled the living body of the conquered chieftain's wife. A hole was quickly dug, the stake planted and fagots supplied; but before a fire could be kindled the wretched woman was dead, so that the barbarians were defeated in their hellish scheme of burning her alive.

I do not know how long these brutalities lasted, for I remember very little after this last attempt, except that the bushmen packed in plantain leaves whatever flesh was left from the orgie, to be conveyed to their friends in the forest. The butchery

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made me sick, dizzy, paralysed. I sank on the earth benumbed with stupor; nor was I aroused till nightfall, when my Kroomen bore me to the conqueror's town, and negotiated our redemption for the value of twenty slaves.

NOTE. — The late Sir Harry Johnston pointed out (in his most interesting book, *Liberia*) that the Vai tribesmen of Digbi, negroes with a Berber admixture, have never indulged in cannibalism, to judge by the records of several centuries, so that this whole episode is probably an invention of Canot's, dressed up to suit the popular taste for horrors. His motive is discussed in the Introduction. — [EDITOR.]

## CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

‘DON PEDRO BLANCO had left Gallinas – a retired *millionaire*!’ When I heard this announcement at the factory, I could with difficulty restrain the open expression of my sorrow. It confirmed me in a desire that for some time had been strengthening in my mind. Years rolled over my head since, first of all, I plunged accidentally into the slave-trade. My passion for a roving life and daring adventure was decidedly cooled. The late barbarities inflicted on the conquered in a war of which I was the involuntary cause, appalled me with the traffic; and humanity called louder and louder than ever for the devotion of my remaining days to honest industry.

As I sailed down the coast to restore a child to his father – the King of Cape Mount – I was particularly charmed with the bold promontory, the beautiful lake, and the lovely islands that are comprised in this enchanting region. When I delivered the boy to his parent, the old man’s gratitude knew no bounds for his offspring’s redemption from slavery. Everything was tendered for my recompense; and, as I seemed especially to enjoy the delicious scenery of his realm, he offered me its best location as a gift, if I desired to abandon the slave-trade and establish a *lawful* factory.

I made up my mind on the spot that the day should come when I would be lord and master of Cape Mount; and, nestling under the lee of its splendid headland, might snap my fingers at the cruisers. Still, I could not, at once, retreat from my establishment at New Sestros. Don Pedro’s departure was a sore disappointment, because it left my accounts unliquidated and my release from the trade dependent on circumstances. Nevertheless, I resolved to risk his displeasure by quitting the factory for a time, and visiting him at Havana after a trip to England.

It was in the summer of 1839 that I arranged my affairs for a long absence, and sailed for London in the schooner *Gil Blas*. Two months slipped by delightfully in Great Britain when a

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sense of duty called me to Havana; yet, before my departure, I resolved, if possible, to secure the alliance of some opulent Englishman to aid me in the foundation and maintenance of lawful commerce at Cape Mount. Such a person I found in Mr. George Clevering Redman, of London, who owned the *Gil Blas*, which, with two other vessels, he employed in trade between England and Africa.

I had been introduced to this worthy gentleman as 'a lawful trader on the coast.' Still, as I did not think that business relations ought to exist between us while he was under so erroneous an impression, I seized an early opportunity to unmask myself. At the same time, I announced my unalterable resolution to abandon a slaver's life for ever; to establish a trading post at some fortunate location; and, while I recounted the friendship and peculiar bonds between the king and myself, offered to purchase Cape Mount from its African proprietor, if such an enterprise should be deemed advisable.

Redman was an enterprising merchant. He heard my proposal with interest, and, after a few days' consideration, assented to a negotiation, as soon as I gave proofs of having abandoned the slave traffic for ever. It was understood that no contract was to be entered into, or document signed, till I was at liberty to withdraw completely from Don Pedro Blanco and all others concerned with him. This accomplished, I was to revisit England and assume my lawful functions.

I found Don Pedro in no humour to accede to these notions. An American vessel had been recently chartered to carry a freight to the coast; and, accordingly, instead of receiving a release from servitude, I was ordered on board the craft as supercargo of the enterprise! In fact, on the third day after my arrival at Havana, I was forced to re-embark for the coast without a prospect of securing my independence.

The reader may ask why I did not free myself at a word from a commerce with which I was disgusted? I had too large an unliquidated interest at New Sestros, and while it remained so, I was not entitled to demand from my employer a final settlement for my years of labour. In other words I was in his

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power, so far as my means were concerned, and my services were too valuable to be surrendered by him voluntarily.

A voyage of forty-two days brought me once more to New Sestros, accompanied by a couple of negro women, who paid their passage and were lodged very comfortably in the steerage. The elder was about forty and extremely corpulent, while her companion was younger as well as more comely.

This respectable dame, after an absence of twenty-four years, returned to her native Gallinas, on a visit to her father, king Shiakar. At the age of fifteen, she had been taken prisoner and sent to Havana. A Cuban confectioner purchased the likely girl, and, for many years, employed her in hawking his cakes and pies. In time she became a favourite among the townsfolk, and, by degrees, managed to accumulate a sufficient amount to purchase her freedom. Years of frugality and thrift made her proprietor of a house in the city and an egg-stall in the market, when chance threw in her way a cousin, lately imported from Africa, who gave her news of her father's family. A quarter of a century had not extinguished the natural fire in this negro's heart, and she immediately resolved to cross the Atlantic and behold once more the savage to whom she owed her birth.

I sent these adventurous women to Gallinas by the earliest trader that drifted past New Sestros, and learned that they were welcomed among the islands with all the ceremony common among Africans on such occasions. Several canoes were despatched to the vessel, with flags, tom-toms, and horns, to receive and welcome the ladies. On the shore, a procession was formed, and a bullock offered to the captain in token of gratitude for his attention.

When her elder brother was presented to the retired egg-merchant, he extended his arms to embrace his kinswoman; but, to the amazement of all, she drew back with a mere offer of her hand, refusing every demonstration of affection till he should appear dressed with becoming decency. This rebuke, of course, kept the rest of her relatives at bay, for there was a sad deficiency of trousers in the gang, and it was the indispensable garment that caused so unsisterly a reception.

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But Shiakar's daughter, travelled as she was, could neither set the fashions nor reform the tastes of Gallinas. After a sojourn of ten days, she bade her kindred an eternal adieu, and returned to Havana, disgusted with the manners and customs of her native land.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

WHILST I was abroad in England and Cuba, my *chargé d'affaires* at New Sestros sent off a cargo of three hundred negroes, nearly all of whom were safely landed in the West Indies, bringing us a profit of nine thousand dollars. There were, however, still one hundred and fifty in our *barracoons* to be shipped; and, as the cargo from the *Crawford* was quickly exchanged with the natives for more slaves, in two months' time I found my pens surcharged with six hundred human beings. Two other neighbouring factories were also crammed; while, unfortunately, directly in front of us, a strong reinforcement of British men-of-war kept watch and ward to prevent our depletion.

No slaver dared show its topsails above the horizon. The season did not afford us supplies from the interior. Very few coasters looked in at New Sestros; and, as our stock of grain and provisions began to fail, the horrors of famine became the sole topic of conversation among our alarmed factors.

It will readily be supposed that every effort was made, not only to economize our scanty stores, but to increase them through the intervention of boats that were sent far and wide to scour the coast for rice and cassava. Double and triple prices were offered for these articles, yet our agents returned without the required supplies. In fact, the free natives themselves were in danger of starvation, and while they refused to part with their remnants, even under the temptation of luxuries, they some imes sent deputations to my settlement in search of food.

By degrees I yielded to the conviction that I must diminish my mouths. First of all, I released the old and feeble from the *barracoon*. This, for a few days, afforded ample relief; but, as I retained only the staunchest, the remaining appetites speedily reduced our rations to a single meal *per diem*. At last, the steward reported that even this allowance could be continued for little more than a week. In twelve days, at farthest, my resources would be utterly exhausted.

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In this extremity, I summoned a council of neighbouring chiefs, and exposing my situation, demanded their opinion as to a fitting course on the dreaded day. I had resolved to retain my blacks till the last measure was distributed, and then to liberate them to shift for themselves.

But the idea of releasing six hundred famishing foemen struck the beach people with horror. It would, they said, be a certain source of war and murder; and they implored me not to take such a step till they made every effort to ease my burden. As a beginning, they proposed at once relieving the *barracoon* of a large portion of females and of all the male youths, who were to be fed and guarded by them, on my account, till better times.

By this system of colonizing I got rid of the support of two hundred and twenty-five negroes; and, as good luck would have it, a visit from a friendly coaster enabled me, within ten days, to exchange my beautiful cutter *Ruth* for a cargo of rice from the colony at Cape Palmas.

It was fortunate that in a week after this happy relief the British cruisers left our anchorage for a few days. No sooner were they off, than a telegraph of smoke, which, in those days, was quite as useful on the African coast as the electric is on ours, gave notice to the notorious *Volador*. There was joy in the teeming factories when her signal was descried in the offing; and, before the following dawn, seven hundred and forty-nine human beings, packed within her one hundred and sixty-five tons, were on their way to Cuba.

*This was the last cargo of slaves I ever shipped.*

When the thought struck me of abandoning the slave-trade, I established a store in the neighbourhood of my old *barracoons* with the design of trafficking in the produce of industry alone. This concern was entrusted to the management of a clever young colonist.

It was about this time that the British brig of war *Termagant* held New Sestros in permanent blockade, forbidding even a friendly boat to communicate with my factory. Early one morning, I was called to witness a sturdy chase between my

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scolding foe and a small sail which was evidently running for the shore in order to save her crew by beaching. The British bulldog, however, was not to be deterred by the perils of the surf, and pursued the stranger till he discovered a large reinforcement of armed natives on the strand ready to protect the fugitives. Accordingly, the Englishmen refrained from assailing the mariners, and confined their revenge to the destruction of the craft.

As this affray occurred within gunshot of my lawful factory, I hastened to the beach under the belief that some of my *employés* had unluckily fallen into a difficulty with the natives. But on my arrival I was greeted by a well-known emissary from our headquarters at Gallinas, who bore a missive imparting the *Volador's* arrival in Cuba with six hundred and eleven of her people. The letter furthermore apprised me that Don Pedro, who persisted in sending merchandise to my slave factory, still declined my resignation as his agent, but acknowledged a credit in his chest of thirteen thousand dollars for my commissions on the *Volador's* slaves. Here, then, were Confidence and Temptation, both resolutely proffered to lure me back to my ancient habits!

I was busily engaged on the sands, enforcing from the negroes a restitution of clothes to the plundered postman, when the crack of a cannon, higher up the beach, made me fear that an aggression was being committed against my homestead. Before I could depart, however, two more shots in the same quarter left me no room to doubt that the *Termagant* was talking with my factory.

I reached the establishment with all convenient speed, only to find it full of natives, who had been brought to the spot from the interior by the sound of a cannonade. The following letter from the captain of the man-of-war, it seems, had been landed in a fishing canoe very soon after my departure in the morning, and the shots, I suppose, were discharged to awake my attention to its contents.

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'HER BRITANNIC MAJESTY'S SHIP TERMAGANT,  
'Off NEW SESTROS, Nov. 5, 1840.

'SIR,

'The natives or Kroomen of your settlement having this day fired on the boats of Her B. M. ship under my command, while in chase of a Spanish boat with seven men going to New Sestros, I therefore demand the persons who fired on the boats, to answer for the same; and, should this demand not be complied with, I shall take such steps as I deem proper to secure satisfaction.

'I have addressed you on this occasion, judging by the interference of those blacks in your behalf, that they are instigated by you.

'I have the honour to be, sir, your obed't serv't,

'H. F. SEAGRAM,

'Lieut. Com.

'To MR. T. CANOT,  
'NEW SESTROS.'

When this cartel fell into my hands it lacked but an hour of unset. The beach was alive with angry rollers, while the *Termagant* was still under easy sail, hovering up and down the coast before my factory, evidently meditating the propriety of another pill to provoke my notice.

I sat down at once and wrote a model response, promising to come on board next morning to satisfy the lieutenant of my innocence; but there was not a Krooman to be found willing to face either the surf or the British sailor. Accordingly, there was no alternative but to suffer my bamboo *barracoons* and factory to be blown about my ears, or to face the danger, in person, and become the bearer of my own message.

The proposal sounded oddly enough in the ears of the Kroomen, who, in spite of their acquaintance with my hardihood, could scarcely believe I would thrust my head into the very jaws of the lion. Still, they had so much confidence in the judgment displayed by white men on the coast, that I had little difficulty in engaging the boat and services of a couple of sturdy chaps; and, stripping to my drawers, so as to be ready

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to swim in the last emergency, I committed myself to their care.

We passed the surf in safety, and in a quarter of an hour were alongside the *Termagant*. Dry raiment and a consoling glass were speedily supplied; and with reassured stamina, I was not long in satisfying the worthy Mr. Seagram that I had no concern in the encounter betwixt the natives and his boats. To clinch the argument I assured the lieutenant that I was not only guiltless of the assault, but had made up my mind irrevocably to abandon the slave-trade.

I suppose there was as much rejoicing that night on board the *Termagant* over the redeemed slaver, as there is in most churches over a rescued sinner. It was altogether too late and too dark for me to repeat the perils of the surf and sharks, so that I willingly accepted the offer of a bed, and promised to accompany Seagram in the morning to the prince.

Loud were the shouts of amazement and fear when the negroes saw me landing next day with an officer who, eighteen hours before, had been busy about my destruction. It was beyond their comprehension how an Englishman could visit my factory under such circumstances, nor could they divine how I escaped, after my voluntary surrender on board a cruiser. When the prince saw Seagram seated familiarly under my verandah, he swore that I must have some powerful *fetiché* or *juju* to compel the confidence of enemies; but his wonder became unbounded when the officer proposed his abandonment of the slave-trade, and I supported the lieutenant's proposal.

I have hardly ever seen a man of any hue or character so sorely perplexed as our African was by this singular suggestion. To stop the slave-trade, unless by compulsion, was, in his eyes, the absolute abandonment of a natural appetite or function. At first, he believed we were joking. It was inconceivable that I, who for years had carried on the traffic so adroitly, could be serious in the idea. For half an hour the puzzled negro walked up and down the verandah, muttering to himself, stopping, looking at both of us, hesitating, and laughing, till at last, as

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he afterwards confessed, he concluded that I was only deceiving the Englishman, and came forward with an offer to sign a treaty on the spot for the extinction of the traffic. I allowed the prince to mislead himself through his natural duplicity on this occasion, as I was thereby enabled to secure the support of British officers for my own purposes.

In a few days the slave-trade at New Sestros was formally abolished by the prince and myself. As I was the principal mover in the affair, I voluntarily surrendered to the British officer on the day of signature, one hundred slaves; in return for which I was guaranteed the safe removal of my valuable merchandise and property from the settlement.

It was a very short time after I had made all snug at New Sestros that misfortune fell suddenly on our parent nest at Gallinas. The Hon. Joseph Denman, who was senior officer of the British squadron on the coast, unexpectedly landed two hundred men, and burnt or destroyed all the Spanish factories amid the lagunes and islets. The natives of the neighbourhood were enabled to gorge themselves with property that was valued at a very large sum. An event like this could not escape general notice along the African coast, and in a few days I began to hear it rumoured and discussed among the savages in *my* vicinity.

For a while it was still a mystery why *I* escaped while Gallinas fell; but at length the sluggish mind of Prince Freeman began to understand my diplomacy, and, of course, to repent the contract that deprived him of a right to rob me. Vexed by disappointment, the scoundrel assembled his minor chiefs, and named a day during which he knew the *Termagant* would be absent, to plunder me. The meeting took place without my knowledge, though it was disclosed to all my domestics, whose silence the prince had purchased. Indeed, I would have been completely surprised had it not been for the friendly warning of the negro whose life I had saved from the saucy-wood ordeal.

I still maintained in my service five white men, and four sailors who were wrecked on the coast and awaited a passage home. With this party and a few household neg oes on whom reliance might be placed, I resolved to defend my quarters. My

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cannons were loaded, guards placed, muskets and cartridges distributed, and even the domestics supplied with weapons; yet, on the night after the warning, every slave abandoned my premises.

When I went my rounds next morning, I was somewhat disheartened by appearances; but my spirits were quickly restored by Seagram.

The *Termagant's* unlooked-for return somewhat dismayed the prince and his ragamuffins, though he had contrived to assemble quite two thousand men about my premises. Towards noon, however, there were evident signs of impatience for the expected booty; still, a dread of my cannon and small-arms, together with the cruiser's presence, prevented an open attack. After a while I perceived an attempt to set my stockade on fire, and as a conflagration would have given a superb opportunity to rob, I made the concerted signal for our British ally. In a twinkling, three of the cruiser's boats landed an officer with twenty-five musketeers, and before the savages could make the slightest show of resistance, I was safe under the bayonets of Saint Georgel.

The prince and his poltroons were panic-struck; and in three or four days my large stock of powder and merchandise was embarked without loss for Monrovia.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

My *barracoons* and trading establishments were now totally destroyed, and I was once more afloat in the world. It occurred to me that no opportunity would be more favourable to carry out my original designs upon Cape Mount, and Seagram was not only willing to carry me there in his cruiser, but desired to witness my treaty with the prince for a cession of territory.

On the evening of the same day the *Termagant* hove to off the hills of Cape Mount. As the breeze and sun sank together, leaving a brilliant sky in the west, we descried from deck a couple of tall, raking masts relieved like cobwebs against the azure. From aloft, still more of the craft was visible, and from our lieutenant's report after a glance through his glass, there could be no doubt that the stranger was a slaver.

Light as was the breeze, not a moment elapsed before the cruiser's jib was turned towards her natural enemy. For a while an ebb from the river and the faint night wind off shore, forced us seaward, yet at daylight, we had gained so little on the chase, that she was still full seven miles distant.

Nothing was heard about decks but prayers for a puff and whistling for a breeze. Meanwhile, Seagram, the surgeon, and purser were huddled together on the quarter, cursing a calm which deprived them of prize-money if not of promotion. Our master's mate and passed midshipman were absent in some of the brig's boats cruising off Gallinas or watching the roadstead of New Sestros.

The trance continued till after breakfast, when our officers' impatience could no longer withstand the bait, and, though short of efficient boats, the yawl and lieutenant's gig were manned for a hazardous enterprise. The former was crammed with six sailors, two marines, and a supernumerary mate; while the gig, a mere fancy craft, was packed with five seamen and four marines under Seagram himself. Just as this flotilla shoved off, a rough boatswain begged leave to fit out my nutshell of a native canoe; and embarking with a couple of

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Kroomen, he squatted amidships, armed with a musket and cutlass!

This expedition exhausted our stock of *nautical* men so completely, that as Seagram crossed the gangway he commended the purser and surgeon to *my* care.

No sooner did the chase perceive our manœuvre, than, running in her sweeps, she hoisted a Spanish flag and fired a warning cartridge. A faint hurrah answered the challenge. Presently, however, the boom of another gun, followed by repeated discharges, rolled through the quiet air from the Spaniard, and the look-out aloft reported our boats in retreat. Just at this moment, a light breeze gave headway to the *Termagant*, so that I was enabled to steer towards the prize, but before I could overhaul our warriors, the enemy had received the freshening gale, and, under every stitch of canvas, stood rapidly to sea.

When Seagram regained his deck, he was bleeding profusely from a wound in the head received from a handspike while attempting to board. Besides this, two men were missing, while three had been seriously wounded by a shot that sunk the yawl. My gallant boatswain, however, returned unharmed, and, if I may believe the commander of the *Serea* – whom I encountered some time after – this daring sailor did more execution with his musket than all the marines put together. The Kroo canoe dashed alongside with the velocity of her class, and, as a petty officer on the Spaniard bent over to sink the skiff with a ponderous top-block, our boatswain cleft his skull with a musket-ball, and brought home the block as a trophy! In fact, Seagram confessed that the Spaniard behaved magnanimously; for the moment our yawl was sunk, Olivares cut adrift his boat, and bade the struggling swimmers return in it to their vessel.

Next day we recovered our anchorage opposite Cape Mount, and wound our way eight or ten miles up the river to the town of Toso, the residence of King Fana-Toro. It did not require long to satisfy his majesty of the benefits to be derived from my plan. The news of the destruction of Gallinas, and of the

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voluntary surrender of my quarters at New Sestros, had spread like wildfire along the coast; so that when the African princes began to understand they were no longer to profit by unlawful traffic, they were willing enough not to lose *all* their ancient avails, by compromising for a legal commerce, under the sanction of national flags. I explained my projects to Fana-Toro, offering him the most liberal terms. My propositions were forcibly supported by Prince Gray; and a cession of the Mount and its neighbouring territory was finally made, under a stipulation that the purchase-money should be paid in presence of the negro's council, and the surrender of title witnessed by the *Termagant's* officers.

I paid King Fana-Toro and his chiefs in council the following merchandise in exchange for his territory: six casks of rum; twenty muskets; twenty quarter-kegs powder; twenty pounds tobacco; twenty pieces white cottons; thirty pieces blue cottons; twenty iron bars; twenty cutlasses; twenty wash-basins; and twenty *each* of several other articles of trifling value.

As soon as the contract was signed, making Mr. Redman and myself proprietors of this beautiful region, I hastened in company with my naval friends to explore my little principality for a suitable townsite. We launched our boat on the lake at Toso, and after steering north-eastwardly for two hours under the pilotage of Prince Gray, entered a winding creek and penetrated its thickets of mangrove and palm, till the savage landed us on decayed steps and pavement made of *English brick*. At a short distance through the underwood, our conductor pointed out a denuded space which had once served as the foundation of an English slave factory; and confirmed it by pointing out, deeply carved in the bark of a neighbouring tree, the name of :—

T. WILLIAMS,

1804

Next day we recommenced our exploration by land, and, in order to obtain a comprehensive view, I proposed an ascent of the promontory of the Cape which lifts its head quite

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twelve hundred feet above the sea. A toilsome walk of hours brought us to the summit, but so dense was the foliage and so lofty the magnificent trees, that even by climbing the tallest my scope of vision was hardly increased. As we descended the slopes, however, towards the strait between the sea and lake, I suddenly came upon a rich, spacious level, flanked by a large brook of delicious water, and deciding instantly that it was an admirable spot for intercourse with the ocean as well as interior, I resolved that it should be the site of my future home. A tar was at hand to climb the loftiest palm, to strip its bushy head, and hoist the union-jack. Before sundown, I had taken solemn territorial possession, and baptized the future town 'New Florence,' in honour of my Italian birthplace.

My next effort was to procure labourers, for whom I invoked the aid of Fana-Toro and the neighbouring chiefs. During two days, forty negroes, whom I hired for their food and a *per diem* of twenty cents, wrought faithfully under my direction; but the constant task of felling trees, digging roots, and clearing ground was so unusual for savages, that the entire gang, with the exception of a dozen, took their pay in rum and tobacco and quitted me. A couple of days more, devoted to such endurance, drove off the remaining twelve, so that on the fifth day I was left with a single attendant. I had undertaken a task unsuited to people whose idea of happiness and duty is divided between palm-oil, concubinage, and sunshine!

I found it idle to remonstrate with the king about the indolence of his subjects. He declared – and perhaps very sensibly – that white men were fools to work from sunrise to sunset every day of their lives; nor could he comprehend how negroes were expected to follow their example. For a while I tried the effect of higher wages; but an increase of rum, tobacco, and coin could not string the nerves or cord the muscles of Africa. Four men's labour was not equivalent to one day's work in Europe or America.

With such slender prospects at New Florence, I left a man in charge of my hut, and directing him to get on as well as he could, I visited Monrovia, to look after the

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merchandise that had been saved from the wreck of New Sestros.

In my former visits to Monrovia, I had been regarded as a dangerous intruder, who was to be kept for ever under the vigilant eyes of government officials. As an established slaver, the port was interdicted to my vessels, and my appearance in the town itself prohibited. Now, however, when I came as a fugitive from violence, and with the relinquishment of my ancient traffic, every hand was extended in friendship. The governor and council allowed the landing of my rescued slave-goods on deposit, while the only two servants who continued faithful were secured to me as apprentices by the court. Scarcely more than two months ago, the people of this quiet village were disturbed from sleep by the roll of drums beating for recruits to march against 'the slaver Canot'; to-day I dine with the chief of the colony and am welcomed as a brother!

I had no difficulty in finding all sorts of workmen in Monrovia, for the colonists brought with them all the mechanical ingenuity and thrift that characterize the American people. In four months, with the assistance of a few carpenters, sawyers and blacksmiths, I built a charming little craft of twenty-five tons. I notice the construction of this vessel, merely to show that the colony and its people were long ago capable of producing everything that may be required by a commercial state in the tropics. When my cutter touched the water, she was indebted to foreign countries for nothing but her copper, chains and sails, everything else being the product of Africa and colonial labour.

I returned to Cape Mount from the colony with several American mechanics and a fresh assortment of merchandise for traffic with the natives. During my absence, the agent I left in charge had contrived, with great labour, to clear a large space in the forest, so that with the aid of my Americans, I was soon enabled to give the finishing touch to New Florence. While the buildings were erecting, I induced a number of natives, by force of double pay and the authority of their chiefs, to form and cultivate a garden, comprising the luxuries of

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Europe and America as well as of the tropics, which, in after days, secured the admiration of many a naval commander.

As soon as my dwelling was completed, I removed my furniture from the colony; and, still continuing to drum through the country for business with the Africans, I despatched my Kroomen and pilots on board of every cruiser that appeared in the offing, to supply them with provisions and refreshments.

An event took place about this time which may illustrate the manner in which a branch of the slave trade is carried on along the coast. Her Britannic Majesty's sloop of war *L* – landed three officers at my quarters to spend a day or two in hunting wild boars. But the rain poured down in such torrents, that, instead of a hunt, I proposed a dinner to my visitors. Soon after our soup had been despatched on the piazza, there was a rush of natives into the yard, and I was informed that one of our Bush chiefs had brought in a noted gambler, whom he threatened either to sell or kill.

It struck me instantly that this would be a good opportunity to give my British friends a sight of native character, at the same time that they might be enabled, if so disposed, to do a generous action. Accordingly, I directed my servant to bring the Bushman and gambler before us; and as the naked victim, with a rope round his neck, was dragged by the savage to our table, I perceived that it was Soma, who had formerly been in my service on the coast. The vagabond was an excellent interpreter and connected with the king, but I had been obliged to discharge him in consequence of his dissipated habits, and especially for having gambled away his youngest sister, whose release from Gallinas I had been instrumental in securing.

'I have brought Soma to your store-keeper,' said the Bushman, 'and I want him to buy the varlet. Soma has been half the day gambling with me. First of all he lost his gun, then his cap, then his cloth, then his right leg, then his left, then his arms, and, last of all, his head. I have given his friends a chance to redeem the dog, but as they had bought him half a dozen times already, there's not a man in the town that will

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touch him. Soma *never* pays his debts; and now, Don Téodore, I have brought him here, and if *you* don't buy him, I'll take him to the water-side and cut his throat!

There – with an imploring countenance, bare as he came into the world, a choking cord round his throat, and with pinioned arms – stood the trembling gambler, as I glanced in vain from the Bushman to the officers, in expectation of his release by those philanthropists! As Soma spoke English, I told him in our language, that he must take the chances he had invoked. Twenty dollars would have saved his life, and yet the British did not melt! 'Take him off,' said I sternly, to the Bushman, 'and use him as you choose!' but at the same moment, a wink to my interpreter sufficed, and the Bushman returned to the forest with tobacco and rum, while Soma was saved from slaughter. It is by no means improbable that the gambler is now playing *monté* on some plantation in Cuba.

## CHAPTER FORTY

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I CONTINUED my labours at New Florence without intermission for several months, but when I cast up my account, I found the wages and cost of building so enormous, that my finances would soon be exhausted. Accordingly, by the advice of my friend Seagram, as well as of Captain Tucker, who commanded on the station, I petitioned Lord Stanley to grant me 100 recaptured Africans to till my grounds and learn the rudiments of agricultural industry. Some time elapsed before an answer was sent, but when it came, my prospects were dashed to the earth.

I may confess that, for a moment, I was at a loss whether to abandon Cape Mount and return to my former traffic, or to till the ground and play waterman to the fleet.

After proper deliberation, however, I ordered from England a large supply of agricultural implements, and of everything requisite for elaborate husbandry. After this, I purchased forty youths to be employed on a coffee plantation, and to drag my ploughs till I obtained animals to replace them. In a short time I had abundance of land cleared, and an overseer's house erected for an old barracoonier, who, I am grieved to say, turned out but a sorry farmer. He had no idea of systematic labour or discipline save by the lash, so that in a month, four of his gang were on the sick list, and five had deserted. I replaced the Spaniard by an American coloured man, who, in turn, made too free with my people and neglected the plantations. My own knowledge of agriculture was so limited, that unless I fortified every enterprise by constant reference to books, I was unable to direct my hands with skill.

Still, I was not disheartened. My trade, on a large scale, with the interior and my agriculture had both failed; yet, I resolved to try the effect of traffic in a humble way, combined with such *mechanical* pursuits as would be profitable on the coast. Accordingly, I divided a gang of forty well-drilled negroes into two sections, retaining the least intelligent on the farm, while the brighter youths were brought to the landing.

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Here I laid out a shipyard, blacksmith's shop, and sawpit, placing at the head of each, a Monrovia colonist to instruct my slaves. In the meantime the neighbouring natives, as well as the people some distance in the interior, were apprised by my runners of the new factory I was forming at Cape Mount.

By the return of the dry season our establishment gave signs of renewed vitality. Within the fences of New Florence there were already twenty-five buildings and a population of 100, and nothing was wanting but a stock of cattle, which I soon procured from the Kroo country.

Thus, for a long time all things went on satisfactorily, not only with the natives, but with foreign traders and cruisers, till a native war embarrassed my enterprise, and brought me in contact with the enemies of King Fana-Toro, of whose deportment I must give some account.

In the time of Fana-Toro, Toso was the royal residence where his majesty played sovereign and protector over six towns and fifteen villages. His government was generally considered patriarchal. When I bought Cape Mount, the king numbered 'seventy-seven rains,' equivalent to so many years; he was small, wiry, meagre, erect, and proud of the respect he universally commanded. His youth was notorious among the tribes for intrepidity, and I found that he retained towards enemies a bitter resentment that often led to atrocious cruelties.

It was not long after my instalment at the Cape, that I accidentally witnessed the ferocity of this chief. Some trifling 'country affair' caused me to visit the king; but upon landing at Toso, I was told he was abroad. The manner of my informant, however, satisfied me that the message was untrue; and, accordingly, with the usual confidence of a 'white man' in Africa, I searched his premises till I encountered him in the 'palaver-house.' The large enclosure was crammed with a mob of savages, all in perfect silence around the king, who, in an infuriate manner, with a bloody knife in his hand, and a foot on the dead body of a negro, was addressing the carcass. By his side stood a pot of hissing oil, in which the heart of his enemy was frying!

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My sudden and, perhaps, improper entrance seemed to exasperate the infidel, who, calling me to his side, knelt on the corpse, and digging it repeatedly with his knife, exclaimed with trembling passion, that it was his bitterest and oldest foe's! For twenty years he had butchered his people, sold his subjects, violated his daughters, slain his sons, and burnt his towns; and with each charge, the savage enforced his assertion by a stab.

I learned that the slaughtered captive was too brave and wary to be taken alive in open conflict. He had been kidnapped by treachery, and as he could not be forced to walk to Toso, the king's trappers had cooped him in a huge basket, which they bore on their shoulders to the Cape. No sooner was the brute in his captor's presence, than he broke a silence of three days by imprecations on Fana-Toro. In a short space, his fate was decided in the scene I had witnessed, while his body was immediately burnt to prevent it from taking the form of some ferocious beast which might vex the remaining years of his royal executioner!

This was the only instance of Fana-Toro's barbarity that came under my notice, and in its perpetration he merely followed the example of his ancestors in obedience to African ferocity. Yet, of his intrepidity and endurance, I will relate an anecdote which was told me by reliable persons. Some twenty years before my arrival at the Cape, large bands of mercenary Bushmen had joined his enemies along the beach, and after desolating his territory, sat down to beleaguer the stockade of Toso. For many a day thirst and hunger were quietly suffered under the resolute command of the king, but at length, when their pangs became unendurable, and the people demanded a surrender, Fana-Toro strode into the 'palayer-house,' commanding a *sortie* with his famished madmen. The warriors protested against the idea, for their ammunition was exhausted. Then arose a wild shout for the king's deposition and the election of a chief to succeed him. A candidate was instantly found and installed; but no sooner had he been chosen, than Fana-Toro - daring the new prince to prove a power of

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*endurance* equal to his own – plunged his finger in a bowl of boiling oil, and held it over the fire, without moving a muscle, till the flesh was crisped to the bone.

It is hardly necessary to say that the sovereign was at once restored to his rights, or that, availing himself of the fresh enthusiasm, he rushed upon his besiegers, broke their lines, routed the mercenaries, and compelled his rival to sue for peace. Until the day of his death, that mutilated hand was the boast of his people.

Prince Gray, the son of Fana-Toro, whom I have already mentioned, died during my occupation of Cape Mount. I was at Mesurado when the event happened, but, as soon as I heard it, I resolved to unite with his relations in the last rites to his memory. Gray was not only a good negro and kind neighbour, but, as my fast friend in 'country matters,' his death was a personal calamity.

The breath was hardly out of the prince's body, when his sons, who owned but little property and had no slaves for sale, hastened to my agent, and pledged their town of Fanama for means to defray his funeral. In the meantime, the corpse, swathed in twenty large country sheets, and wrapped in twenty pieces of variegated calico, was laid out in a hut, where it was constantly watched and *smoked* by three of the favourite widows.

After two months' devotion to moaning and seasoning, notice was sent forty miles round the country, summoning the tribes to the final ceremony. On the appointed day the corpse was brought from the hut, a *perfect* mass of bacon. As the procession moved towards the palaver-house, the prince's twenty wives – almost entirely denuded, their heads shaved, and their bodies smeared with dust – were seen following his remains. The eldest spouse appeared covered with self-inflicted bruises, burns and gashes.

The crowd reached the apartment, singing the praises of the defunct in chorus, when the body was laid on a new mat, covered with his war shirt, while the parched lump that indicated his head was crowned with the remains of a fur hat. All

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the amulets, charms, gree-grees, fetiches and flummery of the prince were duly bestowed at his sides. While these arrangements were making within, his sons stood beneath an adjoining verandah, to receive the condolences of the invited guests, who, according to custom, made their bows and deposited a tribute of rice, palm-oil, palm-wine, or other luxuries, to help out the merry-making.

When I heard of the prince's death at Monrovia, I resolved not to return without a testimonial of respect for my ally, and ordered an enormous coffin to be prepared, covered with blue cotton, studded with brass nails, and adorned with all the gilded ornaments I could find in Monrovia. Besides this splendid sarcophagus, my craft from the colony was ballasted with four bullocks and several barrels of rum, as a contribution to the funeral.

I had timed my arrival at Fanama, so as to reach the landing about ten o'clock on the morning of burial; and, after a salute from my brazen guns, I landed the bullocks, liquor, and coffin, and marched toward the princely gates.

The unexpected appearance was greeted by the family with a loud wail, and, as a mark of respect, I was lifted in the arms of the weeping women, and deposited on the mat beside the corpse. Here I rested, amid cries and lamentations, till near noon, when the bullocks were slaughtered, and their blood offered in wash-bowls to the dead. As soon as this was over, the shapeless mass was stowed in the coffin without regard to position, and borne by six carriers to the beach, where it was buried in a cluster of cotton-woods.

On our return to Fanama from the grave, the eldest son of the deceased was saluted as prince. From this moment the festivities began, and, at sundown, the twenty widows reappeared upon the ground, clad in their choicest raiment, their shaven skulls anointed with oil, and their limbs loaded with every bead and bracelet they could muster. Then began the partition of these relicts among the royal family. Six were selected by the new prince, who divided thirteen among his brothers and kinsmen, but gave his mother to his father-in-law.

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As soon as the allotment was over, his highness very courteously offered me the choice of his *six*, in return for my gifts; but as I never formed a family tie with natives, I declined the honour.

When I was comfortably installed at my establishment, and, under the management of colonists, had initiated the native workmen into tolerable skill with the adze, saw, sledge-hammer and forge, I undertook to build a brig of 100 tons. In six months, people came from far and near to behold the mechanical marvels of Cape Mount. Meanwhile, my plantation went on slowly, while my *garden* became a matter of curiosity to all the intelligent coasters and cruisers, though I could never enlighten the natives as to the value of the 'foreign grass' which I cultivated so diligently. They admired the symmetry of my beds, the richness of my pine-apples, the luxurious splendour of my sugar-cane, the abundance of my coffee, and the cool fragrance of the arbours with which I adorned the lawn; but they would never admit the use of my exotic vegetables. In order to water my premises, I turned the channel of a brook, surrounding the garden with a perfect canal. 'What is it,' exclaimed Fana-Toro, as he beheld the deflected water-course, 'that a white man cannot do!' After this, his majesty inspected all my plants, and shouted again with surprise at the toil we underwent to satisfy our appetites. The use or worth of *flowers*, of which I had a rare and beautiful supply, he could never divine; but his chief amazement was still devoted to our daily expenditure of time, strength, and systematic toil, when rice and palm-oil would grow wild while we were sleeping!

The portion of Cape Mount whereon I pitched my tent, had been so long depopulated by the early wars against Fana-Toro, that the wild beasts re-asserted their original dominion over the territory. The forest was full of leopards, wild cats, cavallis or wild boars, and ourang-outangs.

Very soon after my arrival, a native youth in my employ had been severely chastised for misconduct, and in fear of repetition, fled to the Mount after supplying himself with a basket of cassava. As his food was sufficient for a couple of days, we thought he might linger in the wood till the roots were

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exhausted, and then return to duty. But three days elapsed without tidings from the truant. On the fourth, a search disclosed his corpse in the forest, every limb dislocated and covered with bites apparently made by human teeth. The child had been killed by ourang-outangs, for the scene of the murder was covered with the footprints of the beast and scattered with the skins of its favourite esculent.

I was more annoyed, however, at first, by leopards than any other animal. My cattle could not stray beyond the fences, nor could my labourers venture abroad at any time without weapons. I made use of spring-traps, pit-falls, and various expedients to purify the forest; but such was the cunning or agility of our nimble foes that they all escaped. The only mode by which I succeeded in freeing the *homestead* of their ravages, was by arming the muzzle of a musket with a slice of meat which was attached by a string to the trigger, so that the load and the food were discharged into the leopard's mouth at the same moment. Thus, by degrees as my settlement grew, the beasts receded from the promontory and its adjacent grounds; and in a couple of years, the herds were able to roam where they pleased without danger.

Cape Mount had long been deserted by elephants, but about forty miles from my dwelling, on the upper forests of the lake, the animal might still be hunted; and whenever the natives were fortunate enough to 'bag' a specimen, I was sure to be remembered in its division. If the prize proved a male, I received the feet and trunk, but if it turned out of the gentler gender, I was honoured with the udder, as a royal *bonne-bouche*.

In Africa, a slaughtered elephant is considered public property by the neighbouring villagers, all of whom have a right to carve the giant till his bones are bare. A genuine sportsman claims nothing but the ivory and tail, the latter being universally a perquisite of the king. Yet, I frequently found that associations were made among the natives to capture this colossal beast and his valuable tusks. Upon these occasions, a club was formed on the basis of a whaling cruise, while a single but well-

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known hunter was chosen to do execution. One man furnished the muskets, another supplied the powder, a third gave the iron bolts for balls, a fourth made ready the provender, while a fifth despatched a bearer with the armament. As soon as the outfit was completed, the huntsman's *ju-ju* and *feitiche* were invoked for good luck, and he departed under an escort of wives and associates.

The sportsman is often obliged to circumvent his game during several days, for it is said that in populous districts, its instincts are so keen as to afford warning of the neighbourhood of fire-arms, even at extraordinary distances. The common and most effectual mode of enticing an elephant within reach of a ball, is to strew the forest for several miles with pine-apples, whose flavour and fragrance infallibly bewitch him. By degrees, he tracks and nibbles the fruit from slice to slice, till, lured within the hunter's retreat, he is despatched from the branches of a lofty tree by repeated shots at his forehead.

Sometimes it happens that four or five discharges with the wretched powder used in Africa fail to slay the beast, who escapes from the jungle and dies afar from the encounter. When this occurs, an attendant is despatched for a reinforcement, and I have seen a whole settlement go forth to search for the monster that will furnish food for many a day. Sometimes the crowd is disappointed, for the wounds have been slight and the animal is seen no more. Occasionally, a dying elephant will linger a long time, and is only discovered by the buzzards hovering above his body. Then it is that the Bushmen, guided by the vultures, haste to the forest, and fall upon the putrid flesh with more avidity than birds of prey. Battles have been fought on the carcass of an elephant, and many a slave, captured in the conflict, has been marched from the body to the beach.

## CHAPTER FORTY-ONE

NEW FLORENCE prospered in everything but *farming* and *trade*. At first it was my hope that two or three years of perseverance would enable me to open a lawful traffic with the interior; but I discovered that the slave-trade was alone thought of by the natives, who only bring the neighbouring produce to the beach when their captives are ready for a market. I came, moreover, to the conclusion that the interior negroes about Cape Mount had no commerce with Eastern tribes except for slaves, and consequently that its small river will *never* create marts like those which have direct communications by water with the heart of a rich region, and absorb its gold, ivory, wax, and hides. To meet these difficulties, I hastened the building of my vessel as a coaster.

About this time, an American craft called the *A—* arrived in my neighbourhood. She was loaded with tobacco, calicoes, rum, and powder. Her captain, who was unskilled in coast-trade, and ignorant of Spanish, engaged me to act as super-cargo for him to Gallinas. In a very short period I disposed of his entire investment. The trim and saucy rig of this clipper bewitched the heart of a Spanish trader who happened to be among the *lagunes*, and an offer was forthwith made, through me, for her purchase. The bid was accepted at once, and the day before Christmas fixed as the period of her delivery, after a trip to the Gaboon.

In contracting to furnish this slaver with a craft and the necessary apparatus for his cargo, it would be folly for me to deny that I was dipping once more into my ancient trade; yet, on reflection, I concluded that in covering the vessel for a moment with my name, I was no more amenable to rebuke than the respectable merchants of Sierra Leone and elsewhere who passed hardly a day without selling, to notorious slavers, such merchandise as could be used *alone* in slave-wars or slave-trade.

The appointed day arrived, and my smoking semaphores announced the brigantine's approach to Sugarei, three miles

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from Cape Mount. The same evening the vessel was surrendered to me by the American captain, who landed his crew and handed over his flag and papers. As soon as I was in charge, no delay was made to prepare for the reception of freight; and by sunrise I resigned her to the Spaniard, who immediately embarked seven hundred negroes, and landed them in Cuba in twenty-seven days.

Till now the British cruisers had made Cape Mount their friendly rendezvous, but the noise of this shipment in my neighbourhood, and my refusal to explain or converse on the subject, gave umbrage to officers who had never failed to supply themselves from my grounds and larder. In fact, I was soon marked as an enemy of the squadron, while our intercourse dwindled to the merest shadow. In the course of a week, the commander on the African station, himself, hove to off the Cape, and summoning me on board, concluded a petulant conversation by remarking that 'a couple of men like Monsieur Canot would make work enough in Africa for the whole British squadron!'

The war, whose rupture I mentioned, spread rapidly throughout our borders; and absorbing the entire attention of the tribe, gave an impulse to slavery which had been unwitnessed since my advent to the Cape. The reader may readily appreciate the difficulty of my position in a country hemmed in by war, which could only be terminated by slaughter or slavery. Nor could I remain neutral in New Florence, which was situated on the same side of the river as Toso, while the enemies of Fana-Toro were in complete possession of the opposite bank.

When I felt that the rupture between the British and myself was irreparable, I had less difficulty in deciding my policy as to the natives; and, chiefly under the impulse of self-protection, I resolved to serve the cause of my ancient ally. I made whatever fortifications could be easily defended, and, by way of show, mounted some cannon on a boat which was paraded about the waters in a formidable way. My judgment taught me from the outset that it was folly to think of joining

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actively in the conflict; for, while I had but three white men in my quarters, and the colonists had returned to Monrovia, my New Sestros experience taught me the value of bondsmen's backing.

Numerous engagements and captures took place by both parties, so that my doors were daily besieged by a crowd of wretches sent by Fana-Toro to be purchased *for shipment*. I declined the contract, but so importunate was the chief that I could not resist his desire that a Spanish factor might come within my limits with merchandise from Gallinas to purchase his prisoners. 'He could do nothing with his foes,' he said, 'when in his grasp, but slay or sell them.' The king's enemy, on the opposite shore, disposed of his captives to Gallinas, and obtained supplies of powder and ball, while Fana-Toro, who had no vent for his prisoners, would have been destroyed without my assistance.

Matters continued in this way for nearly two years, during which the British kept up so vigilant a blockade at Cape Mount and Gallinas, that the slavers had rarely a chance to enter a vessel or run a cargo. In time, the *barracoons* became so gorged that the slavers began to build their own schooners. When the *A*— was sold, I managed to retain her long-boat in my service, but such was now the value of every egg-shell on the coast, that her owner despatched a carpenter from Gallinas, who, in a few days, decked, rigged, and equipped her for sea. She was twenty-three feet long, four feet deep, and five feet beam, so that when afloat, her measurement could not have exceeded four tons. Yet, on a dark and stormy night, she dropped down the river, and floated out to sea through the besieging lines, with thirty-three black boys, two sailors, and a navigator. In less than forty days she transported the whole of her living freight across the Atlantic to Bahia. The negroes almost perished from thirst, but the daring example was successfully followed during the succeeding year, by skiffs of similar dimensions.

If I am conscious of anything during my domicile at Cape

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Mount, it is of a sincere desire to prosper by lawful and honourable thrift. But, between the native wars, the turmoil of intruding slavers, and the suspicions of the English, everything went wrong. The friendship of the colonists at Cape Palmas and Monrovia was still unabated; appeals were made by missionaries for my influence with the tribes; coasters called on me as usual for supplies; yet, with all these encouragements for exertion, I must confess that my experiment was unsuccessful.

I lost my cutter, laden with stores and merchandise for my factory. A vessel, filled with rice and lumber for my shipyard, was captured *on suspicion*, and, though sent across the Atlantic for adjudication, was dismissed uncondemned. The sudden death of a British captain from Sierra Leone deprived me of three thousand dollars. Fana-Toro made numerous assaults on his foes, all of which failed; and, to cap the climax of my ills, on returning after a brief absence, I found that a colonist, whom I had rescued from misery and employed in my forge, had fled to the enemy, carrying with him a number of my most useful servants.

It was about this time that circumstances obliged me to make a rapid voyage to New York and back to Africa. During my absence our ancient king was compelled to make a treaty with his rival, who, under the name of George Cain, dwelt formerly among the American colonists, and acquired our language. It was by treachery alone that Fana-Toro had been dragooned into an arrangement, by which my blacksmith, who married a sister of Cain, was elevated to the dignity of George's *premier*.

Both these scamps, with a troop of their followers, planted themselves on my premises near the beach, and immediately let me understand that they were my sworn enemies. Cain could not pardon the aid I gave to Fana-Toro in his earlier conflicts, nor would the renegade colonist forsake his kinsman or the African barbarism, into which he had relapsed.

By degrees, these varlets, whom I was unable, in my crippled condition, to dislodge, obtained the ears of the British commanders, and poured into them every falsehood that could

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kindle their ire. The Spanish factory of Fana-Toro's agent was reported to be *mine*. The shipment in the *A* -- and the adventure of her boat, were said to be *mine*. Another suspected clipper was declared to be *mine*. These, and a hundred lies of equal baseness, were adroitly purveyed to the squadron, and, in less than a month, my fame was as black as the skin of my traducers. Still, even at this distant day, I may challenge my worst enemy on the coast to prove that I participated, after 1839, in the purchase of a single slave for transportation beyond the sea.<sup>1</sup>

After a brief sojourn at my quarters to repair *The Chancellor*, in which I had come with a cargo from the United States, I hastened towards Gallinas to dispose of our merchandise. We had been already boarded by an American officer, who reported us to his superior as a regular merchantman; yet, such were the malicious representations on the beach against the vessel and myself, that the *Dolphin* tarried a month at the anchorage to watch our proceedings. When I went to the old mart of Don Pedro, a cruiser dogged us; when I sailed to leeward of Cape Palmas for oil and ivory, another took charge of our movements, anchoring where we anchored, getting under way when we did, and following us into every nook and corner. At Grand Buttoa, I took *The Chancellor* within a reef of rocks, and here I was left to proceed as I pleased, while the British cruiser returned to Cape Mount.

<sup>1</sup> From the moment that the first dwelling was erected at New Florence, I carefully enforced the most rigid decorum between the sexes throughout my jurisdiction. It was the boast of our friends at Cape Palmas and Monrovia, that my grounds were free from the debauchery which, elsewhere in Africa, was unhappily too common. I have had the honour to entertain at my table at Cape Mount, not only the ordinary traders of the coast, but commodores of French squadrons, commanders of British and American cruisers, governors of colonies, white and coloured missionaries, as well as innumerable merchants of the first respectability, and I have yet to meet the first of them, in any part of the world, who can redden my cheek with a blush.

But such was not the case at the Cape after Cain and Curtis became the pets of the cruisers, and converted the beach into a brothel.

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The 15th of March 1847 is scored in my calendar with black. It was on the morning of that day that the commander who escorted me so warily as far as Buttoa, landed a lieutenant and sailors at New Florence, and proceeded to search my premises for slaves. As none were found, the captors seized a couple of handcuffs, like those in use everywhere to secure refractory seamen, and carried them on board to their commander. Next day, several boats, with marines and sailors, led by a British captain and lieutenant, landed about noon, and, without notice, provocation, or even allowing my clerk to save his raiment, set fire to my brigantine, store-houses, and dwelling.

As I was absent, I cannot vouch for every incident of this transaction, but I have the utmost confidence in the circumstantial narrative which my agent, Mr. Horace Smith, soon after prepared under oath at Monrovia. The marines and Kroomen were permitted to plunder at will. Cain and Curtis revelled in the task of philanthropic destruction. While the sailors burnt my houses, these miscreants and their adherents devoted themselves to the ruin of my garden, fruit trees, plantations, and waterworks. My cattle, even, were stolen, to be sold to the squadron; and, ere night, New Florence was a smouldering heap!

To this hour, I am ignorant of any lawful cause, or of anything but suspicion, that may be alleged in palliation of the high-handed wrong. Not a line or word was left, whereby I could trace a pretext for my ruin.

THE END.



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